November/December 1995 $2.00

MONTANA OUTDOORS

Our Point of View

RON SPOMER

It was the 16th of July, 1992. The first national Symposium on North America's Hunting Heritage was convening in Bozeman—three years earlier Montana had been rocked by international reaction to the shooting of bison leaving Yellowstone Park.

Montanans were ill-prepared for an assault on hunting, a way of life that had been passed down from generation to generation. After all, these generations of hunters had brought back many species from near-extinction over the past 100 years. And to their credit, Montana hunters met the assaults by animal rights activists—which in some cases were physical—coolly and calmly.

Some thought the controversy would pass quickly. Others saw it as a wake-up call in a changing society.

While the symposium was in progress, USA *Today* surveyed Americans across the country and found 80% supported legal hunting. This past year, a similar study by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies found similar results. A distinction, though, was more clearly defined: While the large majority of Americans continue to support legal hunting, most also believe that many hunters drink while hunting and violate game laws.

It would appear that it is the *hunter*, not the hunting, that concerns many. So what can we do? We can, we must, take individual responsibility for our actions as hunters if hunting is to survive. There may be no more inspiring ambassadors for taking responsibility than our junior hunter education instructors. They serve as role models not only for their peers, but for us all (see page 11).

We can also be aware of and take actions to reduce barriers to participation. One way that hunters can do this is by introducing new people to the sport. For example, over the past decade, participation in waterfowling has declined both in Montana and across the nation due to reduced bag limits, shortened seasons, and other woes. This year, thanks to years of habitat restoration and improved moisture conditons, we once again have near-record numbers of waterfowl. Now would be a great time to get a young person you know or another friend involved (see page 2).

Another major barrier to participation is access. Every year more private land closes or is leased to private parties, isolating many hunters from the opportunity to hunt. Fortunately, the Governor's Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council and Montana's Legislature have taken steps to reverse that trend (see page 25).

The future of hunting rests not with overreacting to those who oppose it, but with building a sound biological and legal basis for management. It rests not with trying to convert anti-hunters into hunters, but with introducing young people to the rewards of our grand tradition (if people do not start hunting in their teens, they likely never will). It rests not with rebuking our critics, but with constantly striving to improve our own conduct afield, and ensuring that all those who wish to call themselves hunters earn that privilege through their actions.

Patrick J. Graham, Director
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

DONALD M. JONES

Turn to page 21 for pointers on icefishing for perch.

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Montana Outdoors (ISSN 0027-0016), the official publication of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, is published bimonthly (January, March, May, July, September, and November). Contributions (manuscripts or illustrations) are welcome with the understanding that the department or the editor cannot be responsible for loss or damage. All contributions will be published at the discretion of the editor. For subscription information, phone 800/678-6668 (toll-free). Subscription rates are $7 for one year, $12.50 for two years, and $17 for three years. (Please add $3 per year for Canadian subscriptions. All other foreign subscriptions, air mail only, are $22 for one year.) Individual copies and back issues cost $2 each, plus postage and handling. Although ***Montana Outdoors*** is copyrighted, permission to reprint articles is available by writing our office or phoning us at 406/444-2474. All correspondence should be addressed: ***Montana Outdoors***, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 930 West Custer Ave., P.O. Box 200701; Helena, MT 59620-0701. ©Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1995. All rights reserved. Indexed by States' Periodical Index, 1660 Smithville Road; Havre, MT 59501.

Postmaster: Send address changes to ***Montana Outdoors***, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 930 West Custer Ave., P.O. Box 200701; Helena, MT 59620-0701. Second-class postage paid at Helena, MT 59620, and additional mailing offices.

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WANTED:
A Few Good Waterfowlers

OF THE VARIOUS types of hunting, waterfowl may be the most daunting for a beginner. There are dogs and decoys, boats and camouflage, steel shot and duck calls. Worst of all, there's that low-flying object, coming through the fog and rain 15 minutes before dawn. Is it a bird? Is it a plane? It better not be a hen mallard. Most wavering hunters would say forget it. Let's talk big game.

by Bruce Auchly

Waterfowl hunters are too often born, not made. They normally pick up the sport as youngsters by way of an older relative. By adulthood, hunters become set in their seasons and methods, and find switching difficult. That's disappointing because after years of low numbers, ducks are flying high again, and most populations of geese continue their long upward spiral.

"Mallard numbers are the highest since the early 1970s," says Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) waterfowl biologist Jeff Herbert. In fact, most duck species that Montana hunters will see are in good shape. That's reflected in larger bag limits and the longer season offered this year.

"Green-winged teal, gadwalls, and shovelers are at or near record highs," Herbert says. "Redheads and canvasbacks are near record highs. Only pintails and scaup remain low."

There are four apparent reasons for the rebound in duck populations: (1) good water conditions over the last three years; (2) the benefits of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) to nesting ducks; (3) improved production and survival of young birds; and (4) cooperative habitat improvement projects completed by state, federal, and private organizations in recent years. Herbert cautions that the battle isn't necessarily over, however. "Habitat conditions are dynamic, and changes in the federal farm program or in wetland protection laws could reverse recent gains. Yet, the outlook for this fall is very bright and we're optimistic about next year's conditions."

For populations of western Canada geese that nest in Montana or migrate through, the good times have continued. "Geese have different nesting requirements than ducks," says Herbert. "Geese are usually associated with lakes, reservoirs, and rivers that have more stable water conditions. They also nest on islands, cliffs, or sometimes even in trees, and readily adapt to artificial nesting structures, so they're less dependent on upland nesting cover."

So where does a waterfowler wannabe start? Take heart. There are several entry-level methods for the man, or woman, who doesn't own a dog or a boat and initially doesn't feel confident about calling in hesitant ducks and geese. Let's start with geese.

JOHN SPRAGUE hunts geese successfully in central Montana using a technique he learned decades ago from his grandfather. It's all done in grain fields after the harvest; no dogs or boats are involved. The technique does require decoys, but as few as a dozen will work. "That's the minimum, one dozen," says Sprague

of Great Falls.

His system involves putting the decoys into groups of five or six, with each group bunched together in an area about 10 feet across. Ten yards or so separates the groups. "Why in groups?" Sprague asks rhetorically. "Because Canada geese feed in family groups."

Sprague also counsels hunters not to worry about mixing different types. Shell decoys, windsocks, or silhouettes all work. "It's what you can afford," he says.

Decoys come in three basic sizes: standard, magnum, and super magnum. The larger sizes supposedly attract birds better because they are easier to see. But Sprague feels mixing shapes and sizes works just fine. In fact, he says, a mixture of different sizes, even brands, of decoys will probably do better than a uniform set. "Look at flocks of Canada geese. They are all different sizes and different shades, some light and some dark."

DAVE BOOKS

Montana's waterfowl populations are in excellent shape this year, prompting a longer season and more liberal bag limits. While waterfowling may be daunting to beginners, Canada geese (lower left) can be successfully hunted in grain fields without a dog or boat, and with as few as a dozen decoys. Ducks pose identification problems to newcomers, but drake mallards (left) are easy to pick out when "jump shooting" sloughs, creeks, or ponds.

JOHN G OBREY, JR

For populations of western Canada geese that nest in Montana or migrate through, the good times have continued.

Sprague does feel it's important to pay attention to how the decoys are set, however. He puts decoys in a huge "J," either in a normal or backwards fashion, depending on the wind. Sometimes the "J" covers 40 to 70 yards across the bottom of the character and 50 to 100 yards along the upright. All the decoys should face into the wind. Sentry decoys, those with their heads up, are placed in the back of each group; the feeders and sleepers are placed near the front. He also recommends keeping frost and snow off the decoys, even if that means occasionally wiping them off.

Hunters should position themselves inside the "J" or inside the family groups. Although learning to use a goose call improves one's chances of bringing birds within range, being hidden and not moving are the key elements. Does the system work? Sprague claims geese will land and walk up to a hunter surrounded by decoys—as long as the hunter is camouflaged and doesn't move.

Hunters should pay particular attention to bright objects that can reflect light, says Sprague. "Flashes from eyeglasses, watches, rings,

shotgun shells, or gun barrels with the bluing worn off scare geese." If eyeglasses are a problem and the wearer doesn't have contacts, a face mask like those used by archers will work.

Finally, hunters shouldn't be afraid to experiment. "If geese are circling but not coming in to land, you have to be ready to change," says Sprague. "Try a different decoy pattern or find out what's spooking them."

So how does one choose a hunting spot? "That's easy," he says. Geese that feed undisturbed in the evening usually return to the same field in the morning. "I tell beginners to get in their pickup and drive country roads, following geese to where they're feeding. Then get permission from the landowner."

LET'S FACE IT, THOUGH, geese are easy to identify compared with ducks. With geese, there is no worry about males or females because they all look alike. But there are good options for first-time duck hunters, too. According to FWP's Jeff Herbert, the simplest approach is "jump shooting" ducks on sloughs, creeks, or ponds. The technique requires only hip boots, a shotgun, and the right kind of weather.

"Late in the season [late November and December] mallards are the most abundant ducks remaining in the state," says Herbert. "That's good, because the drake or male mallard, with its green head, white neck-ring, and chestnut breast is probably the easiest duck for a beginner to identify."

A neophyte hunter can slip quietly up on a group of ducks and pick out a single drake when they flush. "Be sure to think about where the bird might fall and don't shoot in situations where retrieving the duck without a dog would be difficult," he cautions.

"Many young hunters start out this way, and graduate to more sophisticated methods as they gain experience," says Herbert. "Perfecting shooting and calling skills, learning to estimate shooting distances, and being patient with decoying birds takes time and effort, but hunters should challenge themselves by constantly striving to improve."

Herbert notes that a beginner is likely to have a much more satisfying experience if a veteran hunter is along to provide guidance. "Whether it's jump shooting ducks on a stock pond or laying out a spread of decoys on a cattail marsh, each waterfowl hunter should consider taking someone new hunting each year. If possible, this should include more than just one outing, especially if it's a youngster from a nonhunting family."

Waterfowl hunting is steeped in tradition and introducing someone to these nuances will help perpetuate the tradition, says Herbert. He recommends spending some time working on duck identification, repairing and painting decoys, training a dog, practicing shooting, and talking about how to hunt responsibly. "After the hunt, inviting a newcomer over for a well-prepared duck dinner might just make them a waterfowler for life," he says.

MIKE GURNETT

If you're an old hand at waterfowling, this would be a good year to introduce a youngster or a friend to the sport.

Herbert points out that waterfowl hunter numbers have declined over the last generation, both nationally and in-state. "In the late 1970s, Montana had about 27,000 licensed waterfowl hunters. Then concern over pesticide residues in waterfowl reduced those numbers to 16,000 in one year," he says.

Despite a ban on endrin—the pesticide responsible for the problem—participation in waterfowling remained low for several years. "Numbers increased slowly to about 18,000 by 1987, but then in 1988 the bottom fell out again," says Herbert. A combination of factors—drought, restrictive bag limits, shorter seasons, the rising cost of waterfowl stamps, and conversion to steel shot—drove hunter numbers back down to 13,000.

"In 10 years Montana lost *half* its duck and goose hunters," Herbert laments. "Now we're back up to about 18,000, but that's still only the same number of hunters we had eight years ago in 1987."

These trends have consequences that extend far beyond short-term fluctuations in license sales. For better than half a century, waterfowl hunters have recognized the value of habitat protection and international migratory bird management. "Much of the habitat work," says Herbert, "has been made possible by the sale of waterfowl stamps at both the federal and state level, and by hunters' contributions to organizations like Ducks Unlimited. In 1994 and 1995, with the return of good moisture conditions, Montana's numerous duck stamp project sites have produced tens of thousands of ducks. By purchasing duck stamps, waterfowl hunters have put something back into the resource they hold so dear."

Whether you're a newcomer or an old hand, 1995 looks like a great year to immerse yourself in the grand tradition of waterfowl hunting. If you're a former waterfowler who hasn't been out for a few years, this promises to be a great year to come back to the sport. "If you're a beginner," says Herbert, "there are ways to get started that don't require sophisticated hunting techniques and won't put a big strain on your budget. And if you're a seasoned hunter, why not invest in the future of the waterfowl resource by taking a youngster or a friend afield to enjoy the great duck and goose hunting opportunities that Montana offers?" ■

WATCHABLE WILDLIFE

Flying Tigers

by VINCE YANNONE

ONE MORNING YOU MAY BE sipping a cup of coffee, watching the routine antics of the songbirds at your feeder, when a winged missile appears from nowhere, scattering startled finches and waxwings into nearby trees and bushes. If you're close to the action and awake enough to be observant, you may catch a glimpse of a blood-red eye or rusty bars across the intruder's whitish belly. But given the speed of the attack, most observers will be left muttering an astonished, "What was *that*?"

Most likely, it was one of Montana's small "accipiters"—low-flying hawks of the forest that have short, rounded wings and long, slender tails. The short wings enable them to dart between trees and among branches in pursuit of their prey, while the long tail, like the rudder on an airplane, helps them turn quickly—an essential trait when chasing small birds, the primary food of these flying tigers.

Cooper's hawk.

JOHN G. OSREY JR.

Although the family Accipitridae includes some 20 species in the West, including the hawks, eagles, kites, and harriers, only three species are specifically referred to as accipiters: the goshawk, Cooper's hawk, and sharp-shinned hawk. Despite their small size (a male sharpshin is only slightly larger than a sparrow hawk and weighs little more than a robin), these agile speedsters are among the fiercest of our birds of prey.

ALAN G. NELSON

Ask any wildlife student who has spent time in the woods in spring checking up on nesting raptors. Hard hats are the order of the day, because a female goshawk defending its nest will gladly take a chunk from your scalp with swift dive and raking talons. Ornithologist George M. Sutton related this account in 1925: "Intrepid and insistent she swooped at me from all directions and only the branches of the blind kept me from the direct blows of her feet although the protecting boughs cracked and snapped at each onslaught."

Then, too, you may not even see her coming. Says Dr. Sutton:

> The most memorable thing about the day's experience was the method of attack of the female bird, which has partly explained to me the ease with which some of these birds capture their prey. When the Goshawk left her perch to strike at me her set wings and slim body were for several seconds almost invisible and the only actual movement perceptible was the increase in the size of her body as she swiftly approached. Three times at least I was looking directly at the approaching bird *and did not see her at all* because the lines of her wings and body so completely harmonized with the surroundings, and the front view was comparatively so small.

Flying tiger indeed.

The goshawk is the largest of our three accipiters, measuring 20 to 26 inches in length. It is followed by the Cooper's hawk, which is 14 to 20 inches, and finally by the sharp-shinned hawk, which measures 10 to 14 inches. But female accipiters are larger than males, which complicates identification somewhat. A small male goshawk may be about the size of a large female Cooper's, and a small male Cooper's the size of a large female sharp-shinned. Confusing, isn't it?

Yes and no. The adult birds of all three species are slate gray above with a dark cap. Sexes are similar in plumage. But the goshawk, in addition to its larger size, has a broad, white stripe above the eye. Goshawks also appear much more silvery underneath, with less distinctive barring.

Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks are difficult to tell apart, but in addition to being somewhat larger (about crow-sized), the Cooper's has a somewhat rounded tail in flight compared with

The iris of the eye is deep red in adult accipiters and yellow in immature birds. The bird above is an adult goshawk, the one at near right an adult Cooper's hawk, and the bird at far right an immature sharp-shinned hawk.

GARY KRAMER

RICK & NORA BOWERS

the sharpshin's more squarish tail. Both species have rusty barring on the white chest and belly and red eyes as adults (immature birds have yellow eyes).

Another bird of prey that sometimes visits backyard feeders in Montana is the merlin, a member of the falcon group. Merlins are about the size of sharp-shinned hawks, but they have dark, rather than red, eyes. While accipiters have short, rounded wings, falcons have long, pointed wings. Merlins breed sparsely in Montana, but may be seen throughout the state, especially in fall and winter; like sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks, they feed mostly on small birds.

Biologists believe the three species of accipiters evolved their size differences to take advantage of different-sized prey, allowing them to inhabit the same nesting areas. Goshawks, because they are larger, may derive more than half their food from mammals such as mice, red squirrels, and rabbits, especially snowshoe hares. They also take medium to large-sized birds, including grouse. Sharpshins feed almost exclusively on small birds, although they may occasionally take mice and insects. Cooper's hawks concentrate on small to medium-sized birds and small mammals.

While sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks nest in wooded areas throughout Montana, they are found primarily in the western half of the state. Although many of these hawks migrate south in winter, some are found in Montana year-round. Goshawks, too, nest mainly in western Montana, but wander widely across the state in winter. While all three species nest in densely forested areas, they sometimes hunt in clearings and adjacent open areas.

Sharp-shinned hawks prefer to nest in small, dense thickets of second-growth conifers. A pond or meandering creek is generally close by with small open meadows—ideal habitat for juncos, sparrows, and similar ground-nesting birds. The nest, a flat platform of sticks 10 to 20 feet above the ground, is lined with small twigs and bark. Three to five eggs are laid in May and incubation takes about 34 days.

Cooper's hawks nest in a variety of places, but deciduous trees seem to be preferred, often in draws or riparian areas. Like sharpshins, Cooper's hawks often nest near meadows where songbirds are abundant. The well-concealed nest, usually located halfway up the tree, is constructed of small sticks and lined with bark flakes. Clutch size is commonly three to five, with incubation taking about 32 days. Young birds fledge a month after hatching.

Goshawks prefer to nest in mature forests, building their nest of sticks and twigs 20 to 60 feet up the tree. They, too, lay clutches of three to five bluish-white eggs. Incubation takes about 37 days, and the young can fly at 40 to 45 days.

Although little is known about the population status and productivity of accipiters in Montana, the goshawk is listed by the state as a "species of special concern." Certainly, forest management practices can affect their nesting habitat, and declines in songbird populations resulting from habitat loss in the U.S. and in the neotropics adversely affect their food base (see *Montana Outdoors*, July/August 1994). Like other raptors,

JOHN G. OBREY, JR

Sometimes called "bullet" hawks, sharpshins deftly dodge and dart through thick woods in pursuit of their prey.

PHIL FARNES

The Cooper's hawk (above)—the original "chicken hawk" so despised by farmers in the days of free-roaming barnyard fowl—preys primarily on small to medium-sized birds and mammals. Hunting from a perch and diving with lightning speed, this fierce little hawk sometimes follows songbirds (like the Lincoln's sparrow at right) into brushy thickets.

RICK & NORA BOWERS

accipiters suffered significant losses in the 1950s and 1960s when eggshell thinning caused by DDT was a serious problem (DDT was banned in this country in 1972).

Accipiters migrate during daylight hours, flying above the treetops during early morning and soaring at higher altitudes during the middle of the day. It is often during migration that sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks seek a convenient meal at a backyard bird feeder.

While working for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, I had numerous calls about songbirds being killed by hawks at bird feeders. In most cases, Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks were the culprits. If a hawk is seen chasing a songbird into a thicket, it is generally a Cooper's hawk, while a hawk snatching and carrying a songbird away with a quick burst of speed is more likely to be a sharpshin. Sharpshins often hunt opportunistically, flying over and around bushes and trees in hopes of surprising small birds. Cooper's hawks, however, prefer to hunt from a perch and dive at their prey. They will frequently follow a songbird into a thicket and carry out the chase on foot, while sharpshins seldom do this.

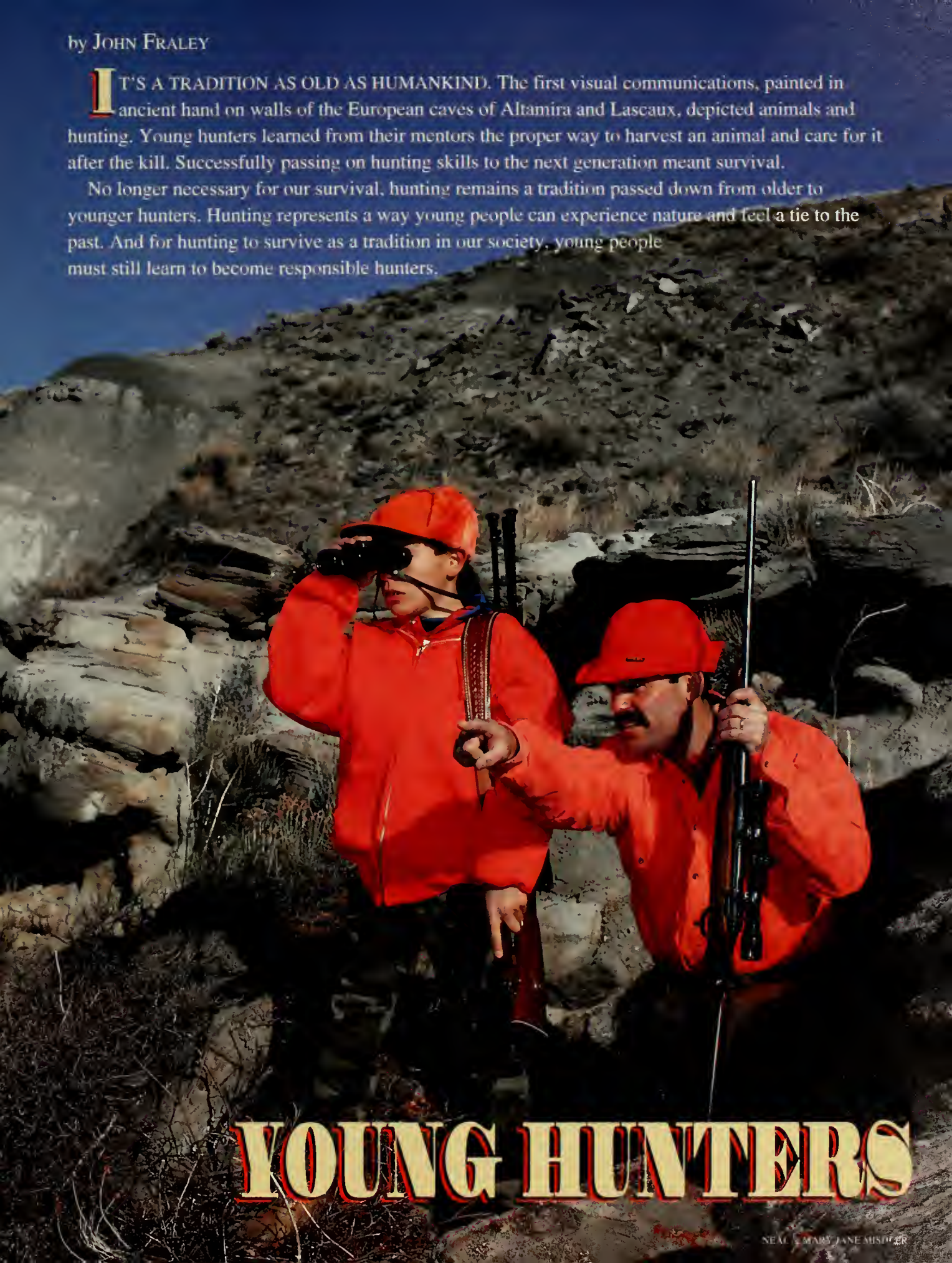
I have also picked up both sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks that have flown into windows, often in the area of bird feeders. If you discover such an injured bird, cover it with a cloth so it can't see you. Then put on a heavy pair of gloves to protect you from the talons and place the bird in a covered cardboard box (make sure the box has adequate ventilation). Then call your local FWP office for information on where to take the bird (it is illegal for you to keep it).

If you are concerned about losing songbirds to birds of prey, you could consider moving your feeding stations close to cover where songbirds will have a ready avenue of escape. But remember that predation is a part of life, and an unexpected visit from one of Montana's flying tigers may just be the birdwatching event of the year. ■

by JOHN FRALEY

IT'S A TRADITION AS OLD AS HUMANKIND. The first visual communications, painted in ancient hand on walls of the European caves of Altamira and Lascaux, depicted animals and hunting. Young hunters learned from their mentors the proper way to harvest an animal and care for it after the kill. Successfully passing on hunting skills to the next generation meant survival.

No longer necessary for our survival, hunting remains a tradition passed down from older to younger hunters. Hunting represents a way young people can experience nature and feel a tie to the past. And for hunting to survive as a tradition in our society, young people must still learn to become responsible hunters.



YOUNG HUNTERS

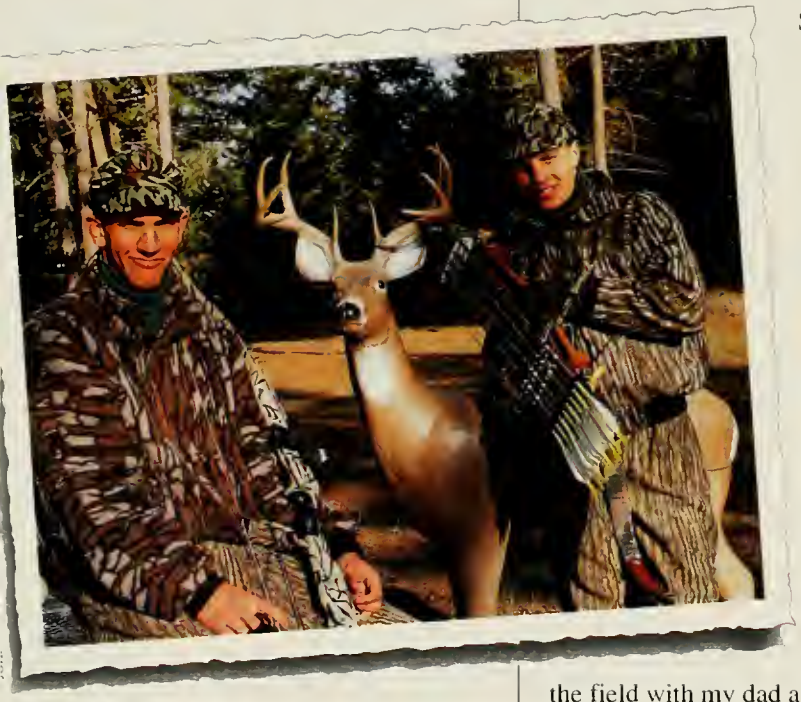
SEAL / MARY JANE MISDER

If you listen to them, you'll find that most of today's young hunters began hunting with a parent. They grew up exposed to hunting as a positive tradition, and they value the intense ties to nature and to their hunting partners that hunting creates. To enjoy hunting, they often forgo sports and other activities that occupy the time of many adolescents. Girls who become avid hunters might risk the stigma of being viewed as "different" among their classmates.

Across Montana, some of the most dedicated young hunters can be found among the ranks of the hunter education program. These 105 junior hunter and bowhunter instructors (or instructors in training) represent what is best about our hunting youth because they not only hunt, they have a desire to pass along good hunting ethics to youngsters just entering the hunt. Listening to them describe their hunting experiences is instructive and vital if we are to maintain our hunting traditions.

What motivates these young hunters and teachers?

"It's been a tradition with me," says 18-year-old Steven Stafford. "Each season, hunting refreshes me. I've tagged along with my dad since I was a few years old. I've been brought up in hunting, and I'm concerned about the future of hunting."



Kalispell-area brothers Steven (left) and David Stafford have bowhunted together for years. Both are involved in Montana's hunter education program as junior instructors.

Steven, who lives near Kalispell, is a five-year veteran of the hunter education program. He is enthusiastic about his teaching role, noting that hunter education keeps him "in tune" and makes him feel excited about hunting.

"When I first took the course," he says, "I liked the way it was run and an instructor asked dad if he was interested in teaching. I soon got involved as a junior instructor, and my brother followed a few years later. When hunting season rolls around we're ready to go—teaching the course has helped all three of us become better and safer hunters."

Like most young hunters, Steven emphasizes comradeship when talking about his desire to hunt. "Some of the most enjoyable times in my life have been spent in the field with my dad and brother, hunting. The companionship is an important part of hunting. If you harvest an animal, it's a bonus."

Steven and his brother, David, have bowhunted together for years. David shoots instinctively, that is, without using sights, because he likes the added challenge. "I like the rewards of hunting," he says, "the excitement, the feeling of accomplishment, the meat. Bowhunting lets me get out in the field sooner. I like being in the woods and getting to know it better." David puts more time into hunting than many of his friends do because, he says, "I'm not much into organized sports."

Chris Atkinson, 17, sees hunting and hunter education as ways to spend more time with his family. "I took the hunter education class," he says, "and dad became an instructor about the same time. I became a junior instructor and have been teaching for more than four years now.

"It has been a lot of work," he continues. "I put in about 700 volunteer hours this year—I was always with dad, who put in more than 1,000 hours. I love to teach, especially the unit on outdoor survival skills. I like to get to know the other instructors and students."

Chris talks effusively about his love for hunting, ticking off the reasons: "The adventure, the fun, the companionship, family tradition, telling hunting stories, meeting people and landowners, the challenge, the good-tasting meat. I'd encourage everyone to try hunting at least once."

Chris's younger sister, Serenity, joined him as a junior instructor last year. Like the Staffords, the Atkinsons enjoy hunting together. "I like everything about hunting," says 14-year-old Serenity. "Even field dressing the deer I got last year was fun; it made me feel proud I could do it myself."

On the Atkinsons' hunt to eastern Montana last year Serenity bagged a magnificent mule deer buck. "It was neat because I was hunting with all guys and I got the biggest buck," she said. "That's not always important, but in this case it was a big thrill. Dad got it mounted for me and it's hanging above our stairs."

Serenity found that many of her friends at school did not share her acceptance of hunting. "Some of my friends who are girls think it's gross, others think of "Bambi" when they think of hunting," she says. "Some of the boys have the attitude that 'You can't hunt, you're just a girl.' Even on TV you don't see many girls with guns; there's a lack of role models. I believe it's the way you're raised and your parents' attitude towards it that determines if girls will hunt."

JOHN HALEY

Chris and Serenity Atkinson.

Shawna Hawk, 15, became a junior hunter education instructor at age 12. Another junior instructor, Elijah Corrigan, got her involved as she went through the course. Shawna acknowledges the burden of late hours and missed dinners typical of the experience of all hunter education instructors. But she says the feeling of accomplishment it gives her is worth it.

"I like to get into the class and teach part of it," she says. "I've taught gun carries, wildlife identification, water safety, and survival. I like gun handling best because it's hands-on."

Shawna puts in an hour of study time on the hunter education manual and notes before each class. "Each time I go through a section I learn more," she says. "I want to get an outdoor job and this is good experience."

Hiking and hunting experiences with her mother fueled Shawna's interest in hunting. "From the time I was born my mother carried me around in a backpack. She and my brother would start out and hike until there was no daylight left. My mom loves the outdoors, fishing and hunting. My grandpa got her interested in it."

Shawna describes herself as a "tomboy" who was raised in Pleasant Valley west of Kalispell and who "knows it like the back of my hand." She owns a 6 mm Remington and a .30-30 Winchester. Known as an accomplished hunter, she says she has "always had a skill in spotting deer." Experiencing the outdoors is the major reason she hunts.

JOHN HALEY

Shawna Hawk.

April Kelly is the dean of the young hunter education instructors in the Kalispell area. Eighteen years old, but accomplished beyond her years, she manages to juggle two jobs and the responsibility of organizing and leading 13 other junior hunter education instructors. She started in the hunter education program at the encouragement of her brother, Brett. Then her mother, Jean, became an instructor.

"What's most rewarding to me is the drop in hunting accidents we've seen with

hunter education," she says. "All kids should have the opportunity to feel comfortable with guns; remember that many kids come from single-parent families. I love working with the kids best—you know they appreciate your efforts and they get something out of it. I'd like to see more and more girls take the hunter education course."

JOHN FRALEY

April Kelly and her mother, Jean.

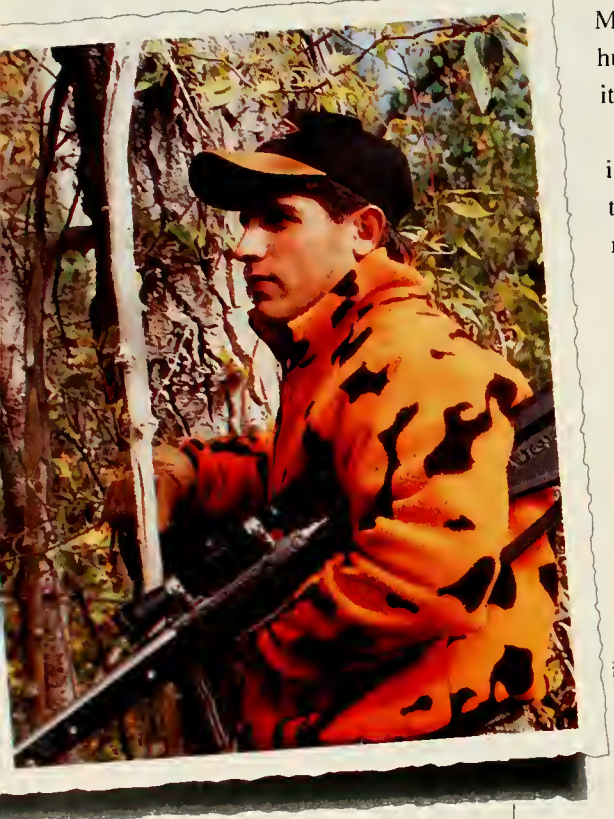
April has hunted since age 12, and she's "shot shotguns since before I can remember." Her biggest motivation in hunting is her love of nature and the relaxation outdoor experiences bring.

She believes that parents' attitudes are important in encouraging more girls to get involved in hunting. "I was lucky because my brother, dad, and mother always encouraged me," she says. Some men don't feel women should hunt, and that can influence girls to not try."

On the other hand, April believes that forcing hunting on girls can be just as negative. "I've been brought up to know that if I don't enjoy an activity, I don't have to take part. I haven't been pushed to hunt, that's why I've kept it up. It's exciting to me; it always has been."

April says the attitude that hunting is "not a woman's thing" is changing. "You still have traditional men who think you should only be in the kitchen cooking and cleaning," she said. "Women nowadays have discovered their independence."

The influx of people from outside Montana is, according to April, affecting Montana's hunting tradition. "I've had quite a few people say, 'You really hunt?' To them, hunting is weird, but to me, not hunting is weird. In Montana it's traditional—your mom, sister, or aunt hunts."



JOHN FRALEY

Vinny Delgado.

Vinny Delgado, 15, of Whitefish has been a junior hunter education instructor for nearly three years. He enjoyed the class so much as a student that he decided to take it again, and Whitefish instructor Tony Kastella recruited him. Vinny finds that he can be a bridge between the students and the adult instructors.

"Sometimes the kids can talk to me more easily than to the adults," he says. "I've never had a problem with the students not respecting me because they can see I know what I'm talking about. That's more important than your age."

Vinny feels that being a hunter education instructor has put pressure on him to be a more responsible hunter. "Dad looks to me to do the right thing," he says. When students have asked Vinny if he follows all the rules he teaches, he responds, "If you hunt long enough, you'll make mistakes. But the key is thinking about ethical behavior towards the animal you're hunting." Like many young hunters, Vinny started going with his dad at an early age. "I'd go along and carry an air rifle," he remembers. "I hunt to experience nature; the actual killing is not what I enjoy."

Most of Vinny's male friends at Whitefish Central School also hunt. But he notices fewer girls take part. He believes that some girls see hunting as a "guy's thing," or "they think it's cruel and don't view it as positively."

Lack of ability is not the reason fewer girls hunt, according to Vinny. "I've

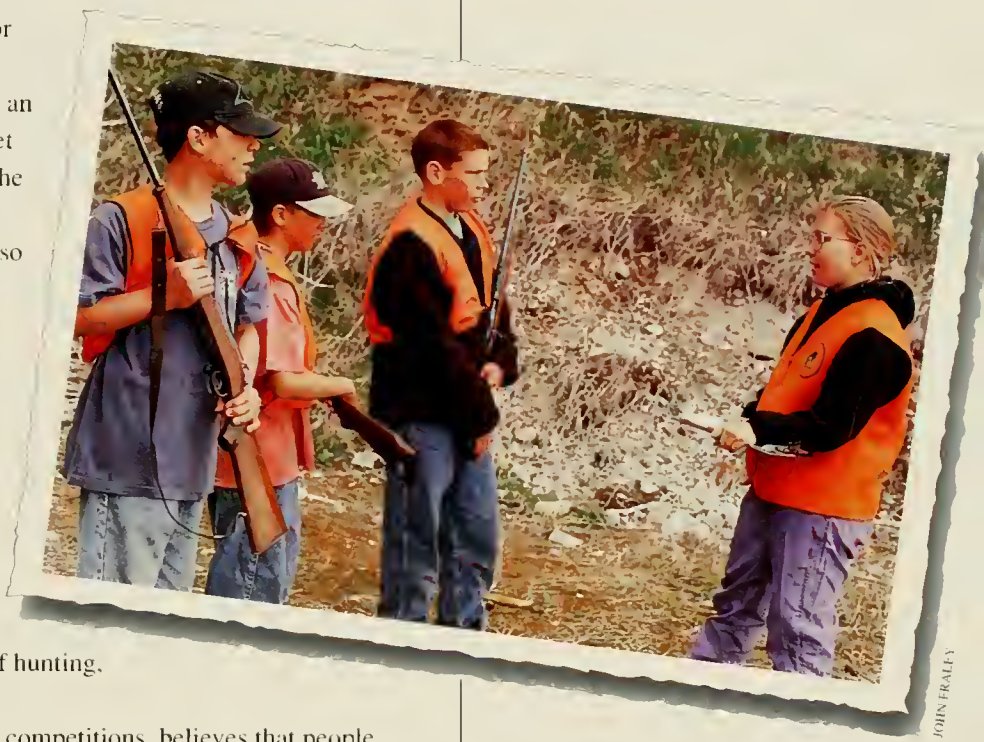
hunted with girls—they're just as good as guys and in some cases better because they haven't developed bad habits."

One goose hunt stands out in Vinny's mind, and illustrates his love for hunting. "It was a gorgeous morning and we saw, I'll bet, a thousand geese. The sun on the mountains, the birds, the setting, it was just perfect. Just flat-out fun."

Another junior hunter education instructor in the Whitefish program, Samantha Bench, 16, has hunted with her father since she was 3 years old. "I live in a rural area and can go target shooting by walking off my back porch. It's always been part of my life."

This year, Samantha assumed co-instructor duties with one other instructor for a class. "Sometimes, at first, I feel I'm not viewed as an authority figure," she says. "I'm only five feet tall and I don't have a deep voice. But once the students find out you know your stuff, they respect you. They're not expecting someone so young to have authority over them."

According to Samantha, hunting is accepted in her circle of friends, both male and female, in high school. "This is Whitefish, Montana," she says. "Most of my friends hunt or have at least taken the hunter education course. Hunting is a big part of the talk at school—who got what, where. The guys usually inflate their stories." Samantha, unlike others, doesn't see much evidence of peer pressure keeping girls out of hunting, but she is afraid that it might change.



JOHN FRALEY

A junior instructor in Whitefish, Samantha Bench enjoys passing her knowledge of hunting and her love of wildlife on to other young people.

Samantha, who shoots .22 caliber rifles in competitions, believes that people moving into Montana can hold the "Bambi view" and may see gun owners as radicals. "A family from back east with three girls moved in next to us," she remembers. "They couldn't believe I owned firearms. They had never handled a gun but they've had their first shooting lesson now."

Spending time in the outdoors and sharing the experience with her father have been major motivators for Samantha. "I love the woods; it's pretty that time of year. I love carrying firearms around, the grain of the wood stock, preparation for hunting season." She describes herself as "into biology" and a lover of deer meat. But she admits she doesn't actually like to shoot the animal.

"This past fall the one nice buck I saw was in my headlights," she says. "I hunted that buck for two weeks but I couldn't find him during legal shooting hours."

WHAT CAN WE LEARN from these experiences and views of a handful of young hunters in northwestern Montana, and are they reflective of other young hunters across the state?

It's clear that these young people are nature oriented, and view hunting in a surprisingly complex way given their age. Obviously, they are experiencing the social changes, pressures, and changing views on hunting created by people moving to Montana from urban areas.

Based on what these young hunters have told us, it's important for parents to

introduce children to the outdoors very early in life. James Swan, in his 1995 book, *In Defense of Hunting*, notes that role models, especially parents, set the stage for a child's view of nature and hunting. He contends that "simple walks in the woods with your children are an important foundation for the rest of their lives."

Swan compares the modern hunting experience of adolescents with the rites of passage common in early societies. This seems especially true for many beginning hunters 12 or 13 years of age, who often view bagging an animal as an important symbol of accomplishment. But based on views of the teens interviewed for this story, a more enlightened view of hunting can develop very early in a hunter's life.

Across the nation, young hunters consistently report that a parent or close relative introduced them to hunting. This view of hunting as a "family value" is key, according to Mark Duda, the executive director of Responsive Management, a social research organization.

"About 90% of the children who become hunters grow up in a hunting family," says Duda. "It takes a hunter to make a hunter." Duda also has found that it is important for beginning hunters to achieve some level of success. "That's often what captures their interest at first," he adds.

The experiences of April Kelly, Shawna Hawk, Samantha Bench, and Serenity Atkinson reflect a mixed view of the young woman's hunting experience; they've encountered a variety of reactions, mostly positive, to their participation in hunting and hunter education. They all express a desire to see more female role models in teaching positions. In fact, females make up about 30% of all hunter education students and hunters in Montana, yet only about 15% of Montana's hunter education instructors are female. This points to a "gender gap" in the hunter education program.

Duda notes that female participation in hunting nationwide increased from 1.5% in 1980 to about 3% in 1991. Perhaps as more women become involved in hunting and gain more experience they will join the hunter education program in greater numbers.

JOHN FRALEY

IS MONTANA'S HUNTING HERITAGE IN GOOD HANDS? If these young hunters represent the majority of youngsters, the answer is yes. These teenagers cherish hunting enough to pass their views on to their peers and to even younger hunters. That's a lesson and an example everyone can take to heart. ■

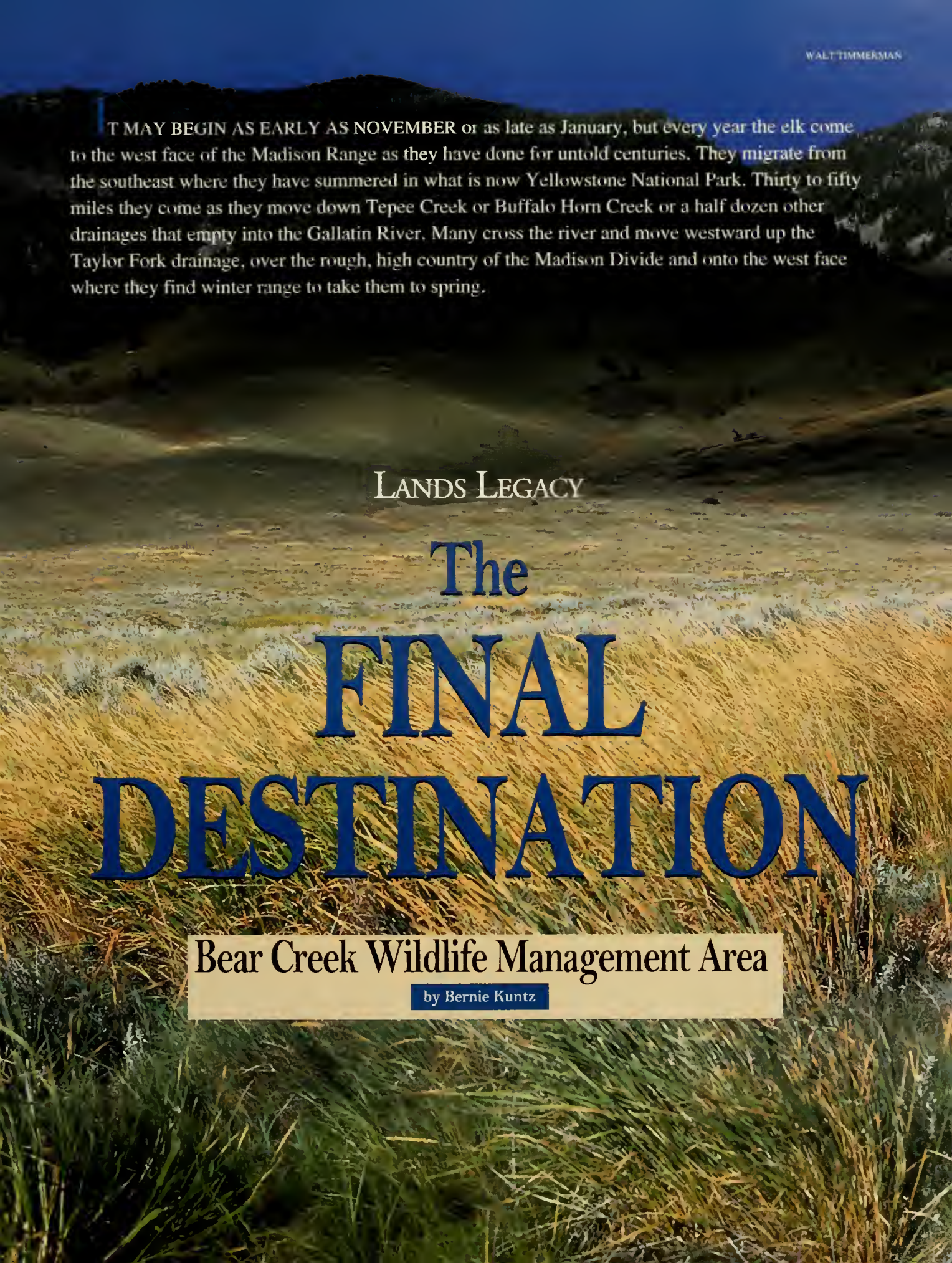
GETTING INVOLVED IN HUNTER EDUCATION

Becoming a junior hunter education instructor offers a great opportunity for youngsters to practice good citizenship, according to FWP's Hunter Education Coordinator Tim Pool. "The junior instructor program is important to us and to the junior instructors," Pool says. "It's an important source of recruitment for our instructor program, and the junior instructors learn leadership skills that will carry them through other endeavors in life."

To become a junior hunter or bowhunter education instructor, youngsters must:

- Be between the ages of 12 and 17.
- Have completed the standard hunter education or bowhunter education course.
- Fill out an application available from the lead hunter education instructor in your area. For details, call the nearest FWP office or talk to any hunter education instructor.

The same process is followed to become an adult instructor for those 18 years of age and older.



WALT TIMMERMAN

IT MAY BEGIN AS EARLY AS NOVEMBER or as late as January, but every year the elk come to the west face of the Madison Range as they have done for untold centuries. They migrate from the southeast where they have summered in what is now Yellowstone National Park. Thirty to fifty miles they come as they move down Tepee Creek or Buffalo Horn Creek or a half dozen other drainages that empty into the Gallatin River. Many cross the river and move westward up the Taylor Fork drainage, over the rough, high country of the Madison Divide and onto the west face where they find winter range to take them to spring.

LANDS LEGACY

The FINAL DESTINATION

Bear Creek Wildlife Management Area

by Bernie Kuntz

Some of the winter range is found on expansive private ranches in this upper Madison Valley, some is found on federal land contained within the Beaverhead National Forest, and an important segment is located on the Bear Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA).

The deeded land that makes up Bear Creek WMA was acquired by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) between 1954 and 1963—3,458 acres of elk winter range at a cost of $29 an acre for a total cost of just over $100,000. Today, home sites in the upper Madison Valley sell for as much as the entire Bear Creek WMA!

The area provides winter range for two elk herds—a resident herd that spends the year in the Madison Range—and a second herd that migrates out of Yellowstone each year. Depending on winter conditions, between 900 and 1,400 elk winter on Bear Creek WMA, and FWP's objective in the agency's official elk management plan is to maintain this number.

"The Bear Creek area is unique in that it is the final winter destination for elk following a long and complicated migration," says Kurt Alt, FWP's biologist in charge of the Gallatin and Madison drainages. These same elk calve in the Taylor Fork drainage, which makes the current consolidation efforts between FWP, the U.S. Forest Service, and Big Sky Lumber Co. so crucial. "If we lose Taylor Fork to subdivision, we lose many of the elk that migrate through this part of the country, and certainly the ones that calve in that drainage."

Private lands along the lower elevations provide key habitat for wildlife using the area—a fact that did not escape the department personnel who spearheaded the purchase of a conservation easement from the Bear Creek Angus Ranch in 1994. The easement affirms the common ground that exists between agricultural use and wildlife, and allows reasonable public access, prohibits future subdivision, and conserves through private ownership 5,278 acres of winter range for elk, mule deer, and pronghorn antelope.

Acquisition and easements have conserved for wildlife a portion of an area that during the last decade has seen accelerated growth of subdivisions. They also have provided much needed recreational access to U.S. Forest Service land that lies behind and above the private holdings. "Without the acquisition of Bear Creek WMA, and without the Bear Creek Angus Ranch easement, these properties would likely have been subdivided by now or sometime in the not-too-distant future," Alt says.

Bear Creek WMA is unique in other ways too, in that it encompasses land from the 5,800-foot valley floor all the way to the top of the "Helmet"—a 9,600-foot granite escarpment that is part of Sphinx Mountain.

Fred King, manager of southwestern Montana's WMAs, sums it up this way: "Part of the ability for animals in Montana to survive in this harsh climate lies in their opportunity to move, change feeding locations, and conserve energy. The value of Bear Creek's varied topography and elevations to wintering wildlife confronted by wind, deep snow, and extreme cold can't be overstated."

Biologists and land managers know that man's activities can be disruptive to wildlife, some more than others. "Many activities, including logging, livestock grazing, and recreation, are transitory in nature, and with good management are compatible with healthy and diverse wildlife populations," says Alt. "However, subdividing the rural landscape into permanent human dwellings can neither be made compatible with nor mitigated for the resulting loss of wildlife habitat and agricultural production."

Fortunately, opportunities still exist

FRED KING

An imposing 9,600-foot granite escarpment that is part of Sphinx Mountain, the "Helmet" (right) is Bear Creek WMA's most distinctive landmark.

for preserving key wildlife habitats. "We have them before us right now in preserving winter ranges through use of conservation easements," Alt says, "and also through the Gallatin Lands Consolidation Program which would secure elk winter range, calving grounds, moose winter range, and grizzly bear habitat."

The Bear Creek area is contained within Hunting District 360, and provides one of the longest elk hunting seasons in Montana. The archery season begins in early September and ends in mid-October. The general season opens the third week of October and runs until late November. Then an antlerless elk season is held in December and January to crop elk that have migrated from Yellowstone National Park. Elk herds are managed to balance population levels with available habitat and landowner tolerance for elk numbers.

In the high country around the Helmet, a hunter with the proper limited entry permit can even hunt mountain goats. "It's a pretty incredible place," King says of Bear Creek WMA and the surrounding area. "One of many features of Bear Creek is that it shows the compatibility that can exist between agriculture and wildlife."

The key to it all is striking that balance between human encroachment and maintaining the productivity of the land for wildlife, agriculture, and ultimately the quality of Montana's way of life. ■

The primary goal of Bear Creek WMA is to provide habitat for elk, mule deer, bears, and a variety of other wildlife, as well as public hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities.

GARY KRAMER

Bear Creek Wildlife Management Area

Location: In Madison County, approximately 11 miles south of Ennis and 5 miles east of Cameron at the base of the west face of the Madison Range.

Size: Bear Creek WMA—3,458 acres; Bear Creek Angus Ranch Conservation Easement—5,278 acres.

Acquisition date: Bear Creek WMA—1954-1963; Bear Creek Angus Ranch Conservation Easement—1994.

Access: From State Highway 287, travel south from Ennis to the small community of Cameron; turn east on the county road and follow signs to WMA entrance.

Management goal: To provide habitat for a variety of wildlife, including elk, mule deer, black bears, grizzly bears, mountain grouse, and nongame species along the face of the Madison Range.

Hunting opportunities: Archery and gun seasons for elk and deer (see regulations for details), black bear, and grouse are open to licensed hunters. Late-season antlerless elk hunts (permit required) extend through the end of January. Permits are also required for mountain goat and moose hunting.

Wildlife viewing: Elk, mule and white-tailed deer, antelope, mountain goats, moose, black bears, mountain lions, occasionally grizzly bears, sandhill cranes, grouse, raptors , songbirds, and numerous small mammals can be found through much of the year. Bear Creek WMA is closed to all visitation from the end of the special late-season elk hunt until May 15 each year.

MIKE BARLOW

Perch on Ice

by Dave Carty

AT ABOUT SIX-THIRTY IN THE MORNING, well before the sun had come up and equally well before any other sane fishermen had ventured out on the ice, Paul Updike and I parked his small pickup on an overlook above Canyon Ferry Reservoir.

"Looks like we beat the crowds," I said, scanning the miles of empty ice for signs of life. Paul likes to beat the crowds. He's convinced that perch bite best first thing in the morning, a conviction I do not share.

We were, nevertheless, the first anglers out. Paul had been fishing several days the previous week and had found schools of fish off a rock formation the locals dub the Hole-In-The-Wall. I was relatively new to the sport in those days, much more willing to accept his advice, suspect as it was. To Updike's credit, a small school did cross our lines shortly after sunrise, and for ten or fifteen minutes we had our hands full hauling eight- and nine-inch perch onto the hard pack. Several hours later, *well* after the sun was up and we were thoroughly frozen, another school found us and we repeated the process again. All in all a very good day, and not less sweet for the dozens of other fisherman who, by that time, were crowding in all around us. When the perch are running, there are plenty for everyone.

In Montana, as elsewhere, perch take a back seat to trout, although that's really a shame. Perch are hard to beat on the table, and the action a school provides when it moves under your rod is hard to describe unless you've been there. Perch are fairly abundant in the Treasure State, primarily in a string of Missouri River impoundments: Canyon Ferry, just north of the little town of Townsend, Hauser Reservoir, immediately to the north of Canyon Ferry, and Holter Reservoir, another few miles downstream from Hauser. Other lakes along the Rocky Mountain Front also have perch, most notably Lake Francis near the town of Valier. But it is the Missouri River impoundments that get the most attention.

Several years ago, Canyon Ferry yielded tens of thousands of perch annually to the Thinsulate-clad crowds that dotted its miles of frozen ice. More recently, that action has waned, but the fishing in Holter and Hauser has picked up. In another year or so, Canyon Ferry may well be on the upswing again. Any of the fishing shops in Helena will be

MILO BURCHAM

When the perch are running, there are plenty for everyone.

up-to-date on what is hitting and where.

Despite the sheer numbers of fish caught each season, perch are often maligned. It's true they don't provide the aerial acrobatics of trout (particularly under a foot-thick sheath of ice), or the heft of walleyes, their larger cousins. But what they do have that most of the other fish mentioned above don't is an innate gullibility to the point of stupidity, and the good taste (as in palatability) to make that appear a virtue. Nevertheless, their lack of intelligence does not make catching them a foregone conclusion.

Yellow perch are where you find them. Although it would no doubt be helpful in some areas, most of the anglers I know don't use sonar and do just fine without it. Generally speaking, from December on perch move to successively shallower water until the March or April thaw. I've caught fish two or three feet down in March shortly before break-up and in 50 or 60 feet of water in December, shortly after ice-up. In between they can be anywhere.

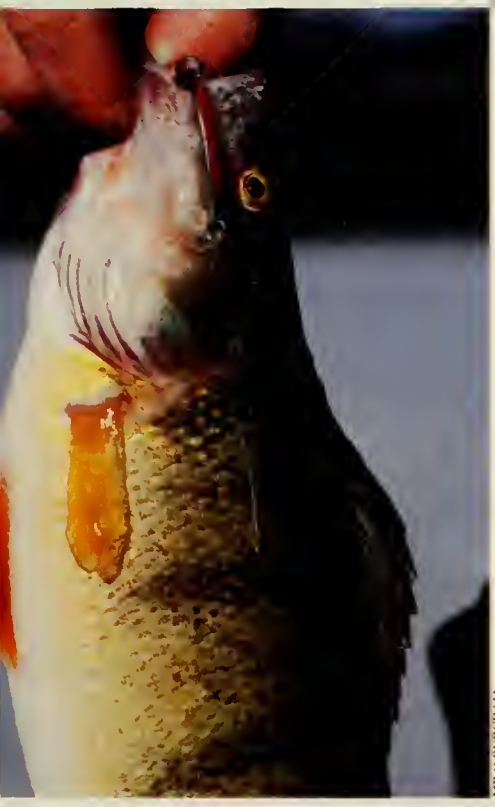
School mobility is hard to determine. Since perch aren't a big-ticket sportfish like walleyes and trout, funding for studies is sparse, if not nonexistent. The fish seem to stay in more or less the same areas year after year, at more or less the same times. Paul and I, for instance, found good fishing just outside Canyon Ferry's Hole-In-The-Wall for several years running, as well as in several other locations on the reservoir—at least until populations began declining recently.

When I'm not relying on past locations, I find perch in the traditional Montana way: by spying on other fishermen. Binoculars are far more common than sonar in my neck of the woods, and setting up within a few dozen yards of another party is not considered poor form. In my experience, perch fisherman are a communal bunch, and most welcome the company. The truth is, it's nearly impossible to be secretive on miles of open ice anyway. Should you start catching fish, you can be sure you'll have company before long.

On the rare days when no one else is out on the ice, I've had to rely on a seat-of-the-pants guesstimate to find a school, taking into consideration the time of year and the weather. For some

"My favorite lure/bait combinations are 1/16 oz. to 1/8 oz. jigs dressed with yellow, pink, and white marabou, or Swedish Pimples, all tipped with one or two maggots."

DAVE CARTY



MILO BURCHAM

"Once a perch is hooked, greed suggests hauling it out of the water as soon as possible...."

reason, I've had my best fishing when the sun was up, although sunny days in Montana can have temperatures of thirty below. (Here's a tip: when it's thirty below, stay home.) With no other angler to spy upon, I'll generally set up on the shallow end of the lake, or perhaps in deep water preceding the shallows, depending on the month. Then I'll drill holes, rig up, and wait. On a good day, a school will move in sooner if not later. If not, I'll pull up my lines and move to a new location. Patience is the name of the game, for fish may move in within minutes of setting up or not at all. You really never know.

Maggots are tried and true perch bait, and my first experience with them was probably similar to everyone else's first experience with the little creatures: I was revolted. Perch, however, love the things. All types of lures and jigs are twice as effective when tipped with a fresh maggot or two.

In fact, I've rarely found lures without some type of added bait productive. My favorite lure/bait combinations are 1/16 oz. to 1/8 oz. jigs dressed with yellow, pink, and white marabou, or Swedish Pimples, all tipped with one or two maggots. At times, other combinations work well. Although black marabou jigs seem to catch more trout than perch, they too can be effective, as can almost any other color. Some days the perch will strike anything, and other days they want hot pink. Jigs are cheap, however, so it pays to have a good selection in your tackle box.

I generally clip extra weight a foot or so above the lure, for the jigs usually aren't heavy enough to drop my line quickly through 20 feet or more of water. For reasons I'll explain shortly, that's important, particularly if you plan on using more than one set-up at a time.

Paul introduced me to another bait that works quite well, one popular among many perch fishermen—the eyes of dead perch. Why they work so well I have no idea, but it's a bait that will outlast maggots two to one, and perch, those cannibalistic little devils, seem to love them.

Once upon a time I hovered over my ice-fishing rods, jigging incessantly, invariably with no results. One day, Updike cured me of that habit by

DONALD M. JONES

"For the record, it's much easier to dig successive holes with a power auger than with a manual auger...."

parking on the seat of the sled we'd used to carry out our gear, pointedly refusing to jig his own rods. He eyed me warily. "What do you think you're doing?" he said.

I looked up at him. "I'm jigging. This is ice-fishing. You're supposed to jig." The wind lifted Updike's red hair and he glanced down the lake at a pickup slowly crawling toward us, ice booming beneath its tires. He spoke again. "That ain't gonna work," he said.

"Why not?"

"Because it doesn't. Look, they don't *want* much movement. You let your jig settle down, then you give it a nudge every now and then. Like this." Updike rose to his feet, walked over to my rod, and nudged the line with his boot. Nudge, nudge. That was it. He walked back to his seat on the sled and sat down. "You think you can handle that?"

"That's all it takes?"

"Yup. All you got to do is get their attention. Once a school moves in you'll see what I mean."

Shortly afterwards, a school did move in, and in five or ten minutes we hauled up a couple dozen perch, all eight inches long or better—whoppers in the perch scheme of things. I hadn't actively jigged my rod since Updike's admonition, and I haven't jigged with it since—except for an occasional nudge.

Many fishermen, including Updike, use spring bobbers—an eight-inch piece of wire taped to the end of the rod that acts as a super-flexible rod extension. When a perch hits, the line running through the tip of the bobber bobs wildly, signaling a strike. The correct way to set the hook is to lift the rod high into the air, straightening the slack in the 10 to 60 feet of line below the ice. Light line really isn't necessary for this, and most fishermen use whatever they have on their reels—usually, six- to eight-pound test. The heavier line will also handle the occasional trout, too. Once a perch is hooked, greed suggests hauling it out of the water as quickly as possible, for there will almost always be others below, and to catch them you need your line in the hole, not on the ice.

On Canyon Ferry, Hauser, and Holter reservoirs, up to six rods are allowed. This is a real plus for hard-core ice-fishing types, for it allows them to take advantage of big schools as they move through. Most fishermen set their rods in a line, which they hope will intersect the general direction the schools are moving. Since there's really no way to determine this, everyone relies on what the fish did the year before. (For the record, it's *much* easier to dig successive holes with a power auger than with a manual auger. If you can't afford a power auger of your own, tag along with someone who can.)

Once you've got a perch on the line, here's what you *don't* do: don't play it from the reel. Instead, handline it in as quickly as possible. That's right—handline it in as fast as you can, unhook the fish, check your bait, and throw the line back down the hole. The quicker you can get your line into the water (your bait should be six or eight inches above the bottom), the quicker you'll catch another little perchy. If you have several rods out, it's likely you'll have more than one fish on at a time, which is why you should handline fish in rather than reel them in—it's much quicker.

A problem that can throw a wrench in the works, however, is a half-frozen line that won't slide back into the hole quickly enough. There are two ways to avoid this. The first is to shovel away the augered ice from around the hole, providing a slick, smooth surface that your line will easily slide over. An ordinary snow shovel works fine, and I carry one with me on the sled that hauls the rest of my gear. The second way is to put plenty of weight above the jig/bait combination. Again, perch aren't particularly skittish creatures, and won't mind a bit if you dangle an ounce or two of lead six inches above their heads.

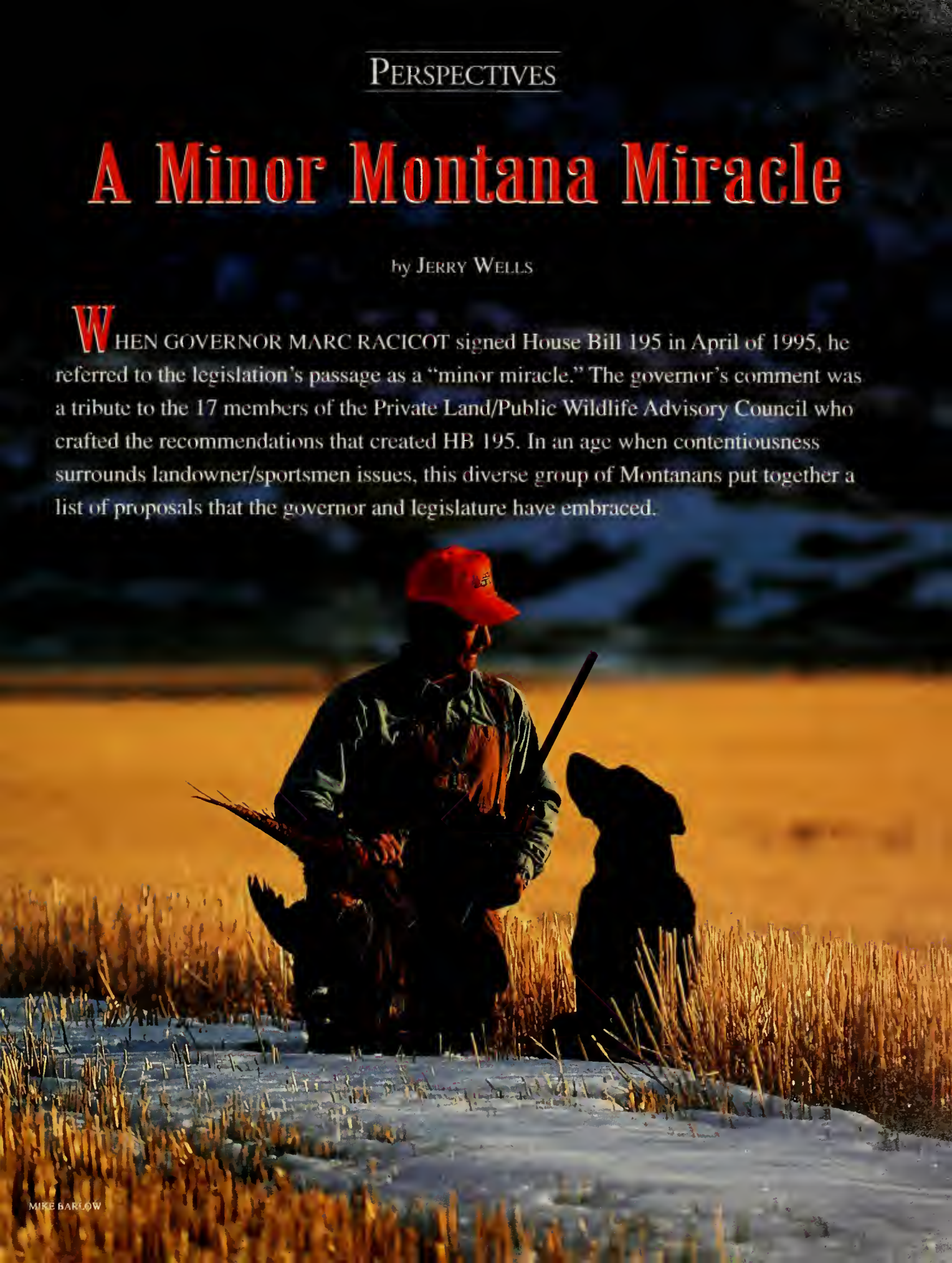
Most of the better anglers around use Swish rods, an outfit that automatically stops the line at a predetermined depth. They're expensive, as ice-fishing rods go—around $25 for a deluxe rig—but nowhere near the loot some people will drop on power augers and snowmobiles. A final, absolutely necessary piece of equipment is a rod saver. This simple, splay-legged rod holder will keep your rod from disappearing down the hole when a fish hits. There are probably hundreds of rods on the floors of Montana's reservoirs; don't let yours be among them.

Look for the perch action to pick up sometime around Christmas this year. No one knows where the fishing will be best, so do me a favor: If you find them, call. ■

A Minor Montana Miracle

by JERRY WELLS

WHEN GOVERNOR MARC RACICOT signed House Bill 195 in April of 1995, he referred to the legislation's passage as a "minor miracle." The governor's comment was a tribute to the 17 members of the Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council who crafted the recommendations that created HB 195. In an age when contentiousness surrounds landowner/sportsmen issues, this diverse group of Montanans put together a list of proposals that the governor and legislature have embraced.



MIKE BARLOW

MIKE BARLOW

Thanks to House Bill 195, which offers innovative solutions to thorny landowner/sportsmen/outfitter problems, public hunting opportunities on private lands will improve in years to come.

The Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council was an outgrowth of the 1993 legislative session, which saw numerous bills introduced on behalf of landowners, hunters, and outfitters. Landowners were trying to get greater recognition and incentives for the role they play in providing wildlife habitat as well as greater control of wildlife management on their lands. Organized sportsmen's groups were attempting to increase their leverage in the management of wildlife on private land and to combat leasing of hunting rights to commercial interests. Outfitters were trying to increase the number of licenses available to their clients. None of the bills passed, and a great deal of acrimony surrounded their demise.

House Bill 195 was the culmination of an 18-month effort on the part of the council. Chaired by Wolf Creek-area

Incentives Advisory Council

Alan Charles, Miles City, Chair; Scott Blackman, Wolf Creek; Ross Bruner, Bozeman; Darlyne Dascher, Fort Peck; John Gibson, Billings; Tom Hougen, Melstone; Ella Mae Howard, Great Falls; Clint McRae, Forsyth; Jack Puckett, Missoula; Maynard Smith, Glen; Sam Waters, Glasgow.

Licensing Advisory Council

Charles Decker, Libby, Chair; Jack Billingsley, Glasgow; Max Chase, Emigrant; Bob Jensen, Circle; Robert Lovegrove, Stevensville; Ray Perkins, Miles City; Russ Smith, Philipsburg.

Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council

Nina Baucus, Helena, Chair; Steve Christensen, Corvallis; Jim Binando, Bureau of Land Management, Billings (ex-officio member); Ken Coulter, Brusett; David "Skip" Erickson, Glasgow; Charles Floyd, Havre; Kelly Flynn, Townsend; Dave Garber, Gallatin National Forest, Bozeman (ex-officio member); Kathy Hadley, Deer Lodge; Jason Campbell, Dept. of State Lands, Helena (ex-officio member); Senator John Hertel, Moore; Verle Rademacher, White Sulphur Springs; Mary Sexton, Choteau; Russ Smith, Philipsburg; Representative Emily Swanson, Bozeman; Art Swetye, Bozeman; Art Vail, Kalispell.

rancher Nina Baucus, this diverse group of hunters, landowners, outfitters, and legislators met throughout the state to hear the concerns of Montana citizens and to share the council's progress. They were aided by nine local groups which provided input and geographic perspectives from points around the state. Utilizing a consensus process for decision-making, the council struggled with some difficult issues that had resisted resolution for years.

Governor Racicot has said that when he created the council, he felt that if they could come back to him after a year and a half with even *one* recommendation they agreed on, he would be pleased. That they were able to achieve consensus on 20 separate recommendations says a great deal about this group of Montanans. Leaving behind the well-defined boundaries and lines in the sand that have characterized landowner/sportsmen/outfitter issues in the past, the council sailed into uncharted waters and developed a package that has the potential of creating a powerful program to benefit landowners, outfitters, and hunters.

The council's recommendations are intended to assist in reaching the following goals:

- Achieving optimum hunter access.
- Protecting wildlife habitat.
- Minimizing impacts on and inconvenience to landowners.
- Encouraging the continuance of a viable hunting outfitting industry.
- Providing additional tangible benefits to landowners who allow hunter access.

Some of the council's recommendations that did not require legislation or additional funding to implement included:

- Providing more wildlife technical assistance to landowners.
- Supporting the Habitat Montana Program.
- Encouraging the consolidation of isolated parcels of state and federal lands.
- Increasing information and education efforts relating to council recommendations.
- Evaluating the current big game combination license.
- Increasing law enforcement presence during the hunting season.

Some recommendations required legislation and funding. The real heart of the council's proposals centered on creating an incentives program that would provide tangible benefits to landowners who allow public hunting access. To fund this program, the council recommended the sale of "variable-priced" licenses to a limited number of nonresident hunters sponsored by outfitters. These recommendations became the primary focus of HB 195.

The landowner incentives proposal is a natural outgrowth of FWP's existing block management program, which in some cases provides department personnel to manage hunters on private land and in other cases compensates landowners for the time they spend managing hunters. The maximum amount that a landowner may receive under the existing program is $2,500. The highly successful block management program has grown from modest beginnings in 1985 and now provides nearly 225,000 hunter days of recreation on 275 block management areas across the state.

HB 195 provides additional incentives to block management enrollees by providing a nontransferable sportsman's license to resident landowners in the program and a nontransferable combination big game license to nonresident landowners. The legislation also created a new option called the hunting access enhancement program, which will provide benefits to landowners who allow public hunting but are not enrolled in the block management program as well as those in the block management program. These benefits are intended to offset potential impacts associated with public hunting access by assisting with general ranch maintenance, conservation efforts, weed control, fire protection, liability insurance, roads, fences, and parking area maintenance. Through the new legislation, the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commis-

RON AASHEIM

The Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies—a group of 19 western states and Canadian provinces—named Helena-area rancher Nina Baucus as the West's Outstanding Citizen Wildlife Contributor at its annual conference last July. Baucus, shown here receiving her award from Western Association President Patrick J. Graham, was honored for chairing Governor Marc Racicot's Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council, a citizen group whose efforts culminated in passage of House Bill 195.

sion may provide up to $8,000 per year to landowners who participate in the hunting access enhancement program or the block management program. Nonresident landowners in the block management program who choose to receive a nonresident combination license are not eligible for incentive payments.

An 11-member Incentives Advisory Council (see sidebar) has been named to advise the FWP Commission on determining how landowners can participate in the block management and hunting access enhancement programs. The committee, which met for the third time in late September, is developing criteria for participation in the program as well as guidelines for compensation. The Incentives Advisory Council will provide its final recommendations to the FWP Commission in December; the commission will then develop draft rules and send them out for public comment early in 1996. Following evaluation of public comment and adoption of final rules, the incentives program will be implemented for the 1996 hunting season.

As mentioned earlier, the incentives program will be funded through sale of variable-priced licenses to nonresident, outfitter-sponsored hunters. Since 1987, 5,600 elk combination licenses and 2,000 deer combination licenses have been set aside for outfitter-sponsored nonresidents each year. The demand for these licenses has steadily increased (this year there were 6,924 applicants for the 5,600 elk combination licenses and 3,427 applicants for the 2,000 deer combination licenses). The uncertainty of their clients drawing licenses has been a source of much concern to the outfitting industry.

Under provisions of HB 195, the FWP Commission is directed to annually establish market-based fees for these outfitter-sponsored elk and deer combination licenses. The fees must be set at a level resulting in sale of as close as possible to (but not in excess of) 5,500 combination elk licenses and 2,300 combination deer licenses each year, calculated over a 5-year period. The benefit to outfitters will be to know that if they can book a nonresident client, the client can purchase a license. The benefit to sportsmen and women across Montana will be a source of funding to provide incentives to landowners who allow public hunting access to their land.

A Licensing Advisory Council composed of seven citizens (see sidebar) has been appointed to offer recommendations to the FWP Commission on criteria to be used in setting the price for the licenses. This committee made its recommendations in October and, following a public comment period on the draft rules, the commission will adopt final rules in December.

Governor Racicot will also be appointing another committee as directed by HB 195 to review the success and progress of the hunter management program and the hunting access enhancement program. This committee will report back to the governor regarding the success of the programs, including a report of annual landowner participation and the number of acres enrolled. The committee may also offer suggestions for funding and changes in the program.

The opportunity for expansion of the block management program that has been created by HB 195 has the potential of being in the best interest of many landowners, hunters, and outfitters. To make the programs work will require trust on the part of each of these groups, which all too often have been antagonists. The future of hunting on private land in Montana, as well as the future of landowner/sportsmen relations, may well rest on the success or failure of these programs.

The Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council recognized that not everyone would be happy with their recommendations. Some landowners will continue to lease their land for commercial hunting, while others will not allow hunting at all or will charge fees to access their land. Still others may not wish to enter into a formal agreement with the state. However, the council believes there will be sufficient landowner interest in the new programs to provide expanded public hunting opportunities on private land. ■

DRAFT WOLF MANAGEMENT PLAN RELEASED

by BOB REAM
FWP Wolf Plan Coordinator

Wolf recovery began in Montana nearly 10 years ago when wolves denned in the state for the first time in more than 50 years. From that natural recovery in Glacier National Park we now have at least eight breeding pairs in northwestern Montana (Figure 1). In addition, the federal government recently reintroduced wolves to both Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho as "experimental populations." Each of these experimental population areas includes parts of Montana (Figure 2).

Because Montana has a natural population of wolves as well as portions of both experimental population areas, it will play a critical role in the recovery and delisting of wolves as an endangered species in the northern Rocky Mountains. Prior to official delisting, the states of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming have a unique opportunity to assume some of the management authority under rules established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service last year. Each state is now preparing a plan outlining how wolves will be managed during the period prior to delisting. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) recently released a draft of its plan for public review and comment. Comments will be taken through mid-December.

While some may question why Montana should assume any wolf management responsibility prior to delisting, FWP is charged with managing all the state's wildlife and currently manages other large predators like mountain lions, grizzlies, and black bears. The period prior to delisting will allow FWP to gain experience working with this species and develop information on which to base post-recovery management strategies. The agency will be in a better position to monitor wolf recovery and determine when recovery goals are achieved, and to

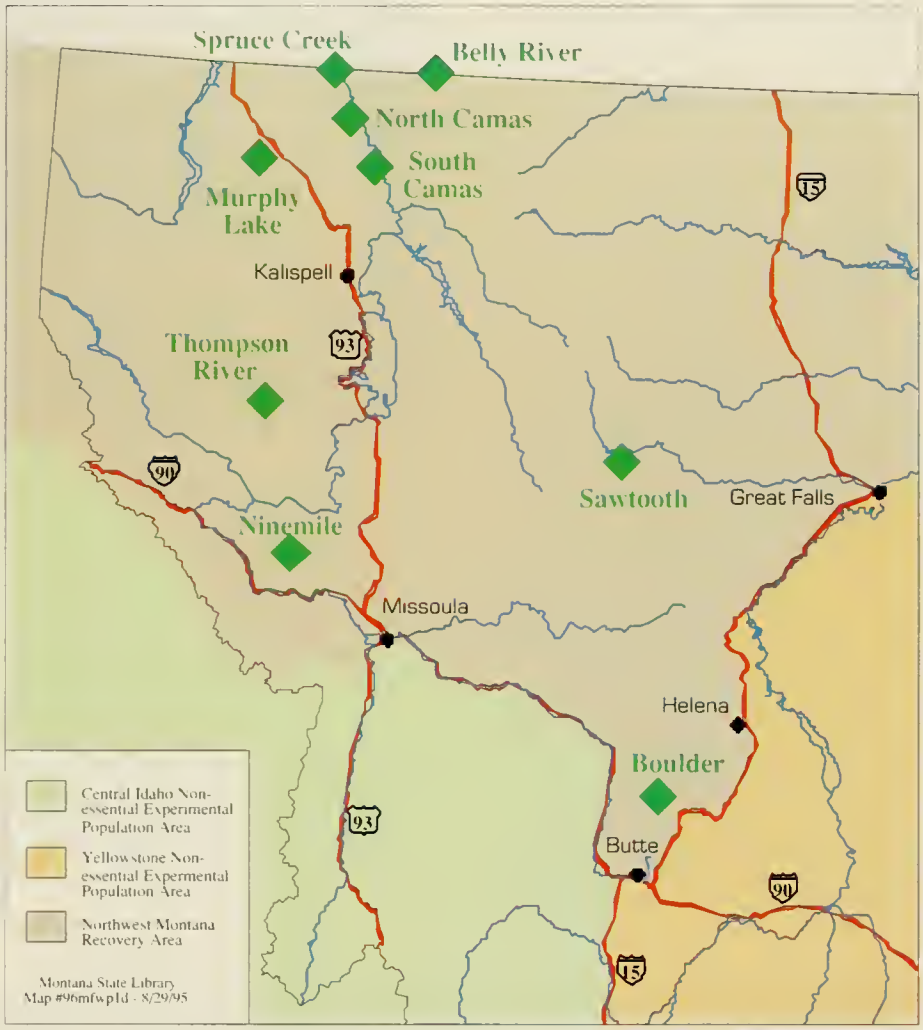


Figure 1—Existing wolf packs in Montana.

assess the impacts of wolf recovery on big game populations and on livestock producers.

Information from other areas suggests that wolf numbers will need to be managed to maintain a balance with other wildlife and to minimize conflicts with livestock. The period prior to delisting will help Montanans learn more about wolves and how to adjust to their presence after delisting. Because FWP personnel are located in communities throughout the state, they are close to landowners, livestock producers, hunters, and others who might be affected. This means ranchers will be able to get quicker responses on depredation complaints; the public will have more immediate access to information, biologists, and enforcement personnel; and local governments will be in closer coordination with the management agency.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Plan has a primary goal of complete delisting of the gray wolf in this region when there are 10 breeding pairs of wolves in each of the three recovery areas for three consecutive years (northwestern Montana, Yellowstone, and central Idaho). There

will be a five-year monitoring period after delisting to assure that population numbers don't fall below the recovery goal.

The northwestern Montana population will be downlisted from endangered to threatened when it reaches 10 breeding pairs. We are nearing that goal. The experimental rules for reintroducing wolves into Yellowstone and central Idaho last winter provide sideboards or constraints on what the state can or cannot do, but they also provide considerable flexibility for livestock producers and landowners in these areas.

Ultimately, FWP's role in wolf recovery will be shaped by the citizens of Montana through their input and comments in the planning process going on right now. If you would like a copy of the Montana Wolf Recovery and Management Plan, contact FWP headquarters in Helena (1420 East Sixth Ave., Helena, MT 59620-0701; (406) 444-2535) or one of the regional offices.

Wolves evoke strong feelings in many people, but the debate must now shift. We no longer need to discuss whether or not there should be wolves in Montana, but how we should manage those we have and get them recovered and delisted. In local areas, like the North Fork of the Flathead where wolves first returned to Montana, local residents have come to accept wolves as another wildlife species that could be subject to the kind of management FWP carries out with mountain lions and bears. The North Fork wolves have been studied for over 10 years, and much has been learned about their food habits, their relationships to their prey and to other predators, and their population increase and dispersal to other areas.

From this experience we know that wolves are capable of repopulating other areas and increasing rapidly compared with grizzlies. We also know that they are one more predator in that ecosystem, and that they will compete with other predators. In other parts of Montana we have also learned that wolves will occasionally prey on livestock, but techniques for dealing with depredating wolves have improved so that control has become swift and efficient. In years to come we will all learn how to adjust to the return of this major predator to Montana's rich wildlife heritage. FWP looks forward to working with all Montanans, not only in this planning process, but for the long-term management of wolves.

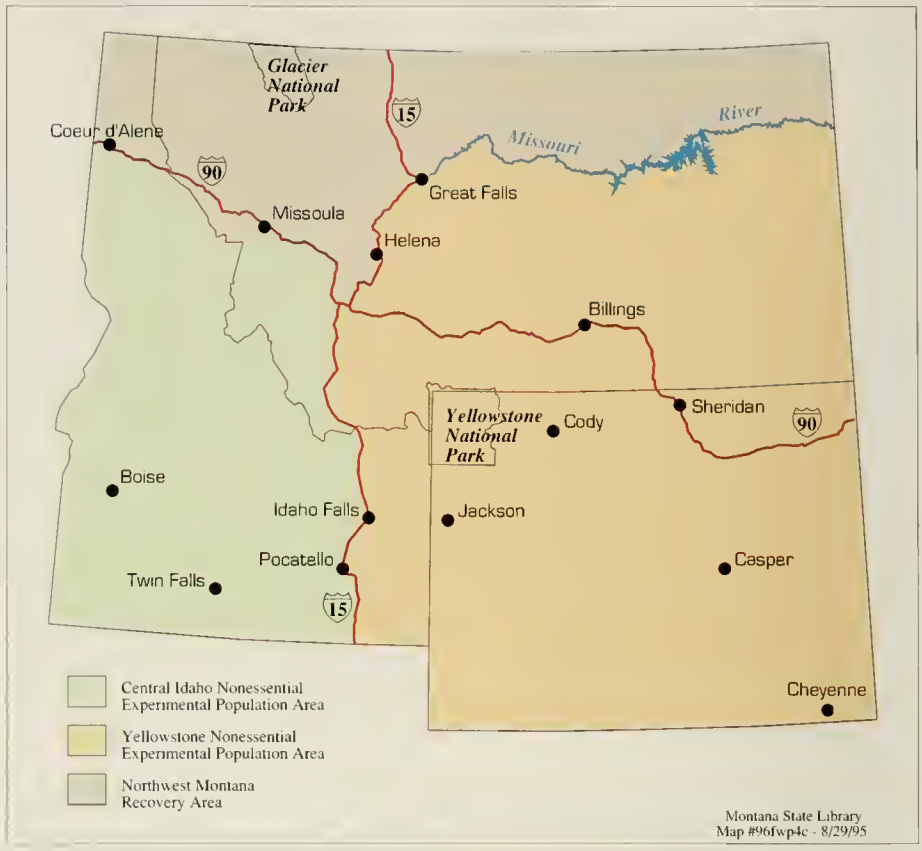


Figure 2—Wolf population areas.

Junior Duck Stamp Contest Funds Educational Programs

Last spring, a panel of judges gathered to judge the first Montana Junior Duck Stamp Contest. Like the competitions held every year to choose the nation's state and federal duck stamps, the Junior Duck Stamp Contest commemorates a duck, goose, or swan species in its native habitat. Junior duck stamps differ from the others in that they are not part of a licensing requirement for hunting waterfowl; rather, they are purchased as collectors' items, with the proceeds going to help fund educational programs and scholarships. The junior contests are administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and co-sponsored by state wildlife agencies.

This year, Montana students in grades K-12 submitted 140 entries. Montana's overall "best of show" winner not only went on to compete in the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Design Contest in Washington, D.C., but it took top honors, besting 47 other entries. For her first-place rendition of a northern pintail, 16-year-old Jie Huang of Hamilton High School received a $2,500 scholarship and a trip to Washington, D.C.

Prints and stamps of this year's Federal Junior Duck Stamp are available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington, D.C. by calling

Jie Huang's northern pintail painting (left) took top honors in both the Montana Junior Duck Stamp Contest and at the national level. Jie, who lives in Hamilton, is a junior at Hamilton High School. Tahan Wichman's watercolor and air brush painting of a pair of wood ducks (lower left) was a winner in the Montana competition for grades 10-12. Tahan is a student at Fergus High School in Lewistown.

(202) 208-4354. For more information on the Montana Junior Duck Stamp Contest, contact Kurt Cunningham at FWP headquarters in Helena (1420 East Sixth Ave., Helena, MT 59620-0701; (406) 444-1267), or Beth Underwood at Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge (P.O. Box 257, Stevensville, MT 59870; (406) 777-5552).—*Beth Underwood, Montana Junior Duck Stamp Coordinator, Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge*

Montana Outdoors Video Subscriptions Available

For an annual price of $25, you'll receive three *Montana Outdoors* videos, one every fall, winter, and spring. Each video explores several high-profile issues that fuel FWP's actions and policies. For example, past videos have featured in-depth reports on whirling disease, FWP's draft wolf management plan, and Montana's State Parks. Start your subscription year with the fall 1995 edition. To subscribe, send your check to: Video Production Unit; MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks; 930 W. Custer Ave; Helena, MT 59620; (406) 444-2733.

A ceremony dedicating Ducks Unlimited's 100th conservation project in Montana was held in August at the Clark's Fork Waterfowl Production Area near Bridger, where a dike and water control structure have been installed to create a 66-acre breeding ground for ducks, geese, shorebirds, and other wildlife. Pictured from left to right are Matthew B. Connolly, Jr., Executive Vice President of Ducks Unlimited; Peter Storer of Saratoga, Wyoming (the George B. Storer Foundation donated $125,000 for the project); and Marc Pierce of Manhattan, Montana, a senior vice president with Ducks Unlimited. Since its inception in 1937, DU has raised more than $891 million to conserve seven million acres of habitat in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

JIM HANSEN

1995 Montana Outdoors Index

The major items published in *Montana Outdoors* in 1995 are indexed below. Extra copies of all '95 issues are available at $3 each (includes postage). The following back issues are available at the same price:

1971—all issues, except March/April
1972—all issues, except May/June
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1975—all issues
1976—all issues
1977—all issues, including Special Yellowstone Issue
1978—all issues, including Special Parks Issue
1979—all issues
1980—all issues, including Special Hunting Issue
1981—1994 all issues
1995—all issues to present date

To inquire about or order a back issue, write: Back Issues, *Montana Outdoors*, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 930 West Custer Avenue, Helena, MT 59620.

FISH/FISHING/WATER

Beyond the Water's Edge—Whether it's teaching kids to fish, studying pond ecology, or checking a river's pulse, aquatic education has rewards for Montanans of all ages (Bruce Auchly, May/June).

Fishing the Opener—Two expert trout anglers share their secrets for early-season success (Dave Carty, May/June).

Have Secchi Disk, Will Travel—More than 100 volunteers across Montana are helping state and federal agencies keep tabs on water quality in our lakes and streams (John Fraley, May/June).

Records Fall Fast in 1994—Montana anglers set seven new fish records in 1994 (Dave Books, May/June).

Our Point of View—Montanans have banded together to try to understand whirling disease, to contain its spread, and to seek answers that will guide us in the future (Patrick J. Graham, July/August).

The Forgotten Streams—Their names may not be well known in angling lore, but their trout are unforgettable (John Barsness, July/August).

Trouble in Trout Paradise—Whirling disease—a baffling ailment caused by a tiny parasite—is threatening the Madison River's wild rainbow trout (Tom Palmer, July/August).

From the Field—Seeking Peace on Montana's Rivers—A River Recreation Conflicts Group was formed in 1994 to investigate ways of alleviating river crowding (Gary "Woody" Baxter, July/August).

Perspectives—Walking the Walk for Bull Trout—Montanans have a legal and moral obligation to maintain viable populations of native species (Governor Marc Racicot, September/October).

From the Field—The Bucket Brigade—Illegal fish transplants are destroying valuable fisheries and wasting thousands of dollars of anglers' money (Jim Vashro, September/October).

Perch on Ice—The social sport of perch fishing is an action-packed way to spend a winter day (Dave Carty, November/December).

GAME/HUNTING

A Montana Tradition—The once-controversial Gardiner late hunt has evolved into a safe and effective means of managing the northern Yellowstone elk herd (Tom Lemke, March/April).

Cougar—Thanks to research and sound management, the future of Montana's mountain lions looks bright (John McCarthy and Jim Williams, March/April).

Our Point of View—Despite our many wildlife successes, the sage grouse is one species that still needs help (Patrick J. Graham, September/October).

Return of the Native—Hunting antelope keeps us in touch with a unique Montana landscape and a truly native animal that has evolved with it (Sam Curtis, September/October).

Partnerships on the Prairie—Two eastern Montana "joint ventures" are doing their part to get the nation's waterfowl populations back on track (Shawn Bayless and Howard Burt, September/October).

Sage Grouse: They Used to Darken the Sky—These native prairie birds are declining throughout the West, primarily due to loss of sagebrush habitat (Charlie Eustace, September/October).

Wanted: A Few Good Waterfowlers—Waterfowl hunting may seem daunting to beginners, but there are some easy ways to get started in the sport (November/December).

Young Hunters—Some of Montana's most dedicated young sportsmen and women can be found in the ranks of the hunter education program (John Fraley, November/December).

Our Point of View—The future of hunting depends on instilling a code of ethical conduct in hunters, removing barriers to participation, and building a sound basis for management (Patrick J. Graham, November/December).

GENERAL

Special Photo Issue (January/February).

Montana Outdoors—A poem accompanying the Special Photo Issue invites readers to see the Big Sky anew in the old cowboy way (Mike Logan, January/February).

FWP Commission Celebrates Centennial Anniversary—Today's sportsmen and women owe a great deal to the foresight of Montana's pioneers in wildlife conservation (William Phippen, The Catchall, March/April).

Dowdy Wins 1995 Waterfowl Stamp Contest—Polson artist Wayne Dowdy's rendition of four tundra swans at Freezout Lake graces the 1995 state waterfowl stamp (William Phippen, March/April).

Perspectives—Montana Fights to Save Wild Life—Montana's early fish and game commissioners faced challenges not so different from those

of today (Thomas N. Marlowe, March/April).

Our Point of View—Volunteers and professionals working together can provide a strong foundation for sustaining wildlife (Patrick J. Graham, May/June).

Nature's Time Capsule—Special wetlands called "peatlands" have chronicled Montana's landscape changes since the age of the last glaciers (Bonnie Heidel, July/August).

A New Plan for Montana's Trails—A comprehensive look at the state's trail system will help identify needs and balance the interests of all users (Jeff Erickson, July/August).

FWP's "Mr. Wildlife Retires"—Long-time youth educator Vince Yannone retired after 25 years with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (Tom Palmer, The Catchall, July/August).

Jie Huang Wins National Junior Duck Stamp Contest—A Hamilton teenager's portrait of a northern pintail bested 30,000 other entries to win national honors (William Phippen, The Catchall, September/October).

Perspectives—A Minor Montana Miracle—The 17-member Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council accomplished what many thought might be an impossible task (Jerry Wells, November/December).

PARKS/DEPARTMENT LANDS

Lands Legacy—Pheasant Heaven—Western Montana bird hunters say Ninepipe Wildlife Management Area is hard to beat (John Fraley and John Grant, March/April).

Lands Legacy—Gateway to the Breaks—Hell Creek State Park makes a good jumping off point for hunting, fishing, and exploring the scenic country surrounding Fort Peck Reservoir (Mike Hathaway, May/June).

From the Field—Pooling Resources to Preserve the Past—With the help of a U.S. Forest Service historic preservation team, FWP has begun a maintenance program for historic buildings at its park sites (John Taillie, May/June).

Lands Legacy—Spirit of the Front—The wonders and worries of the Rocky Mountain Front are all present at Ear Mountain Wildlife Management Area (Bruce Auchly and Quentin Kujala, July/August).

Perspectives—State Parks Make Memories—The 1995 State Parks Poster Contest for fifth grade students generated a record number of entries (Debbie Cheek, July/August).

Lands Legacy—Growing Pains in the Bitterroot—Balancing wildlife needs with population growth in western Montana calls for new management strategies (Mike Thompson, September/October).

Lands Legacy—The Final Destination—Elk from the Yellowstone herd come to the Bear Creek Wildlife Management Area each year to seek forage and shelter from winter storms (Bernie Kuntz, November/December).

WILDLIFE

Our Point of View—Thanks to regulations self-imposed on hunters, the fees they pay to manage wildlife, and the efforts of landowners, many wildlife populations are at near-record levels (Patrick J. Graham, March/April).

Watchable Wildlife—Artful Angler—The osprey, once in serious decline because of DDT, has staged a remarkable comeback (Deborah Richie, March/April).

From the Field—Second-Chance Bears—Personnel at FWP's Wild Animal Shelter in Helena have developed a unique method of raising orphaned bear cubs and returning them to the wild (Vince Yannone, March/April).

Watchable Wildlife—Identification of Montana's Amphibians and Reptiles—A guide to the frogs, toads, snakes, lizards, and turtles that live in Montana, plus facts about their life history and distribution (Jim Reichel and Dennis Flath, May/June).

Perspectives—We're All in This Together—The Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative offers a way for birdwatchers, hikers, and photographers to share in the cost of wildlife conservation (Nels Rodefeld and Betsy Spettigue, May/June).

Watchable Wildlife—Rainbows on the Wing—With their bright colors and glinting flight, butterflies can become our guides to the insect world (Deborah Richie, July/August).

Watchable Wildlife—Devil Bear—A recent study shows wolverines are not the ill-tempered loners they have long been portrayed to be (Bruce Auchly, September/October).

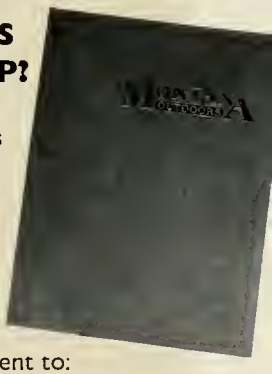
Watchable Wildlife—Flying Tigers—An unexpected visit from one of Montana's woodland hawks may provide the birdwatching thrill of the year (Vince Yannone, November/December).

From the Field—Harmony at Hauser—Thoughtful integration of science and art is allowing eagles and wildlife watchers to coexist at Hauser Lake (Marco Restani and Al Harmata, November/December).

Draft Wolf Management Plan Released—FWP's role in wolf recovery can be shaped by all Montanans through their input and comments on this plan (Bob Ream, The Catchall, November/December).

BACK ISSUES STACKING UP?

Montana Outdoors binders are available at $6 each (includes postage). Each binder holds six issues.



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"There is, in short, a fundamental unity of purpose and method between bird-lovers and sportsmen"

— Aldo Leopold, 1933.

HARMONY AT HAUSER

by Marco Restani, Ph.D. Candidate, Utah State University and Al Harmata, Assistant Research, Montana State University

Today, Leopold's prophecy is becoming more apparent as the boundary between consumptive and other wildlife recreationists blurs. All of us "consume" wildlife, whether by fishing for salmon with a spinning rod or capturing a bird on the wing with a camera. Historically, when wildlife habitat covered much of the landscape, neither group had an appreciable impact on the health of wildlife populations. But times have changed, and burgeoning human populations require that all of us make sacrifices. This has occurred at Hauser Lake near Helena, where resource management agencies have restricted both groups to conserve one of our most precious wildlife species—the bald eagle. Management at Hauser has forged new partnerships that have made a positive difference for wildlife and wildlife enthusiasts.

Kokanee salmon are not native to Montana waters. Prior to the kokanee's introduction in Hauser Lake, migrating eagles passed quickly through the region in search of more productive foraging areas. Circumstances changed when the kokanee fishery increased during the late 1980s. Today, hundreds of migrating eagles stop at Hauser to feed on spawning salmon. The eagle-kokanee rendezvous is a spectacular wildlife phenomenon, one that provides the public a rare glimpse into the habits of our usually more secretive national symbol.

Each autumn, thousands of eagle watchers make their way to Hauser Lake to witness the event. This close-quarters gathering of eagles, salmon, and people presents a unique challenge to resource managers responsible for balancing protection of a federally threatened species with the desires of the tax-paying public. The agencies have risen to the challenge and achieved success by combining interagency cooperation, research results, and public input.

An aerial survey in November of 1989 tallied nearly 200 eagles at Hauser Lake. The magnitude of the count prompted the agencies to craft a management strategy to eliminate potential conflict between humans and eagles—conflicts, for example, involving disturbance by overzealous photographers, eagle watchers, or anglers. Because bald eagles are protected under the Endangered Species Act, they cannot be harmed or harassed in any way; even chasing an eagle to obtain that perfect photograph is illegal.

In summer of 1990, several resource management agencies (Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Forest Service) and other interested parties (Montana Power Company, Montana State University, and Lewis and Clark County) formed the Hauser Lake Bald Eagle Working Group (HLBEWG). Its mission was to provide consistent and defendable management recommendations to agency leaderships. Some members of the group also funded a research program.

Much concern revolved around the knowledge that when bald eagles and people have competed for space at other salmon runs in the West, eagles inevitably have been displaced. Coexistence then became possible only after the wanderings of people were controlled. Resource managers dislike restricting their constituents, yet common sense and the laws dictated that closures—the most dreaded and controversial of management actions—would also be necessary at Hauser Lake to give the eagles the security they need to feed, perch, and roost in peace. Accordingly, HLBEWG recommended to the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission that Hauser Lake be closed from Canyon Ferry Dam to Brown's Gulch, about four lake miles. The closure was to begin in early November and continue through December of each year. HLBEWG also recommended that access to adjacent federal lands be limited.

In recognition of the tremendous

MARCO RESTANI

In 1994, when managers began closing all of Riverside Campground (except for the upper parking lot) on October 15, the eagles not only returned upriver to feed, they began to feed at the campground itself—within 75 yards of excited eagle watchers.

educational opportunity afforded by this spectacular natural event, HLBEWG recommended that the eastern shoreline from the dam to Riverside Campground be left open to provide eagle viewing opportunities. The shore also accommodated late-season anglers. Volunteers were sought to staff the campground and a newly remodeled visitor center each November.

Sound resource management continues long after regulations are established, and only after careful monitoring should policies be declared effective. Flaws are typically discovered in the initial design, and modifications ensue. At Hauser Lake, for example, a University of Montana graduate student evaluated viewer satisfaction in 1992. Surprisingly, and to everyone's disappointment, he found that most people saw fewer eagles than expected. This was disturbing because public support for closures is necessary to ensure their effectiveness and longevity. Unfulfilled expectations often lead to questions regarding policy, and soon the number of violations increases as public support for closures wanes.

Analysis of data on eagle distribution also revealed something troubling. During the 1991 and 1992 seasons, most eagles had perched and foraged directly below Canyon Ferry Dam. But more people visited the site in 1993 as agencies and the local chamber of commerce stepped up promotional efforts to attract tourists. In addition, daily visits by school groups nearly doubled between 1992 and 1993. Eagles responded to this pressure by moving downriver to more secluded, but less productive, foraging areas. You can imagine what this shift did for eagle viewing. Once again, HLBEWG sought remedies.

The group developed a list of options, debated their merits and flaws, and finally decided on a compromise plan that moved the viewing area back from shore. They hoped that concentrating people in the upper parking lot at Riverside would simultaneously increase eagle security and improve eagle viewing. Because numerous studies have shown that increasing the distance between wildlife and people benefits wildlife (no surprise there), the agencies hoped this simple, yet sensible, prescription would yield positive results.

The BLM and BOR, which currently manage Riverside Campground, implemented the new management strategy in 1994. Beginning on October 15, all of Riverside Campground was closed except for the upper parking lot. Fishing was still permitted along the east shore, but only from Canyon Ferry Dam downstream to, but not including, Riverside. The October 15 closure coincided with the recently adjusted river closure—a modification necessary because eagles had been arriving at Hauser earlier each autumn (eagles timed their buildup to kokanee spawning, which was occurring earlier every autumn). Fortunately, the modified closure dates have had little effect on anglers, since relatively few people are fishing for kokanee in late autumn.

The new scheme was a huge success. Not only did eagles return upriver to feed across from Riverside, but they even began to feed *at* the campground itself—a mere 75 yards from excited wildlife watchers! Eagles were again feeding in areas of greatest salmon abundance, filling the views of binoculars and cameras. In addition, people seemed pleased with the new policies at Riverside; entrance fees had been abolished and binoculars and spotting scopes were made available for daily use to those lacking such equipment.

Successful wildlife management is a

blend of science and art. First, scientific knowledge is gained through empirical and experimental research. Unfortunately, some information gaps inevitably exist even after intensive study. It is then that managers must rely on art, that knowledge Leopold said is gleaned from ingenuity, common sense, and resourcefulness. By defining problems clearly, developing and discussing research-based management options, applying compromise solutions, and evaluating the results, HLBEWG integrated science and art to achieve success at Hauser Lake.

Management Summary

Year	Management Situation	Action Taken
1989	Hundreds of eagles seen below Canyon Ferry Dam. Endangered Species Act required they be protected.	River closed in 1990 from 11/8 to 12/31. Adjacent federal lands closed 10/15 (BLM) or 11/1 (BOR) to 12/31. Both closures applied yearly. Research initiated.
1990	Substantial number of eagles arrived at Hauser prior to 11/8 but also left prior to 12/31.	River closure adjusted to begin 11/1 and end 12/15 in 1991. Land closures remained unchanged.
1991	Management worked well.	No changes.
1992	Management worked well.	No changes.
1993	Movement of eagles away from Riverside. Eagles also arrived sooner than 11/1. BLM and BOR assumed responsibility of Riverside management from FWP.	Eagle viewers moved to upper Riverside Campground in 1994. River closure adjusted to begin 10/15 in 1994. Eagle perching poles erected, user fee abolished, and binoculars and spotting scopes provided.
1994	Confusion over closure dates.	BOR land closure adjusted to begin 10/15 in 1995.
1995	Bald eagle reclassified as threatened (rather than endangered) nationally.	Management and protection mandates remained unchanged.

Readers Respond

Was It a Wolverine?

A correction is called for in Bruce Auchly's "Devil Bear" wolverine article printed in the September/October issue of *Montana Outdoors*. Auchly states that the first recorded observations of the wolverine were made by the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Actually, there is no conclusive evidence that the expedition encountered a wolverine anywhere within the western range of this species. Lewis' diary entries are as follows:

August 12, 1805 (Vicinity of Lemhi Pass): "We saw an animal which we took to be of the fox kind, as large or rather larger than the small wolf of the plains—its colours were a curious mixture of black, reddish brown and yellow. Drewyer shot at him about 130 yards and knocked him down, but he recovered and got out of our reach—it is certainly a different animal from any that we have seen."

While in the vicinity of the Great Falls of the Missouri, Lewis writes of wounding a strange-appearing animal, but his description of the animal is inadequate for a positive identification.

June 14, 1805 (Vicinity of Great Falls): "My direction led me directly to an animal that I had first supposed was a wolf; but on nearer approach, or about 60 paces distant, I discovered that it was not; its colour was a brownish yellow; it was standing near its burrow; and when I approached it thus nearly, it crouched itself down like a cat looking immediately at me as if it desired to spring on me. I took aim and fired, it instantly disappeared in its burrow; I loaded my gun and examined the place which was dusty and saw the track from which I am still further convinced that it was of the tiger kind."

While there is a distinct possibility that the animal observed by Meriwether Lewis in the two localities was a wolverine, it is unfortunate that a kill and retrieval of the animal was not made. If such were the case, Lewis, the on-the-scene reporter/naturalist would have paid meticulous attention to the species and provided us with a detailed description of sufficient clarity and depth to allow ready identification of the species.—*Ken Walcheck, Bozeman*

CONTRIBUTORS

The number of waterfowl hunters in Montana has declined over the past 20 years due to restrictive seasons, drought, and a host of other factors. But now, says **BRUCE AUCHLY**, "ducks are flying high again, and our goose populations are healthy and still growing, so it's a good time for people to acquaint or reacquaint themselves with the sport." In "Wanted: A Few Good Waterfowlers" (page 2), he describes some duck and goose hunting techniques that make it easy for beginners to get started. Auchly is FWP's information officer for Region 4 (Great Falls).

Yannone

In his 25 years of working for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, **VINCE YANNONE** had many calls about songbirds being killed by hawks at bird feeders. "In most cases," he says, "Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks were the culprits." To learn more about these fierce little hawks and their larger relative the goshawk, turn to "Flying Tigers" on page 7. Yannone, who recently retired from the department's Conservation Education Division, now works part-time as an educational representative for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and gives programs on wildlife throughout the Northwest.

"It's a tradition as old as humankind," says **JOHN FRALEY**, "and for hunting to survive as a tradition in our society, young people must still learn to become responsible hunters." To find out how modern-day Montana teens view this learning process, Fraley interviewed several junior hunter safety instructors from the Kalispell area (page 11). If the thoughts of these "Young Hunters" are any indication, Montana's hunting heritage is in good hands. Fraley is FWP's information officer assigned to the Kalispell area (Region 1).

In this issue's "Lands Legacy" installment, **BERNIE KUNTZ** describes the Bear Creek Wildlife Management Area near Ennis—"The Final Destination" for elk migrating out of Yellowstone National Park each autumn (page 17). "Depending on winter conditions," says Kuntz, "between 900 and 1,400 elk winter at Bear Creek." The WMA, along with the Bear Creek Angus Ranch Easement acquired in 1994, conserves nearly 9,000 acres of winter range for elk, mule deer, and other wildlife in an area that during the last decade has seen accelerated growth of subdivisions. Kuntz is an information officer working out of FWP's Region 3 (Bozeman) office.

Kuntz

"For ice fishermen in Montana, perch take a back seat to trout, although that's really a shame. Perch are hard to beat on the table, and the action a school provides when it moves under your rod is hard to describe unless you've been there." Thus asserts **DAVE CARTY** in his learned treatise on the social and technical fine points of putting "Perch on Ice." "When I'm not relying on past locations," says Carty, "I find perch in the traditional Montana way: by spying on other fishermen." For this and other tidbits of knowledge that will lead you to action-packed winter days and melt-in-your-mouth filets, turn to Carty's story on page 21. Carty is a Bozeman-based free-lancer who swaps his flyrod for ice-fishing tackle when winter winds begin to howl.

When Governor Marc Racicot signed House Bill 195 in April of 1995, he referred to the legislation's passage as a "minor miracle." An outgrowth of the 1993 legislative session, which saw numerous unsuccessful bills introduced on behalf of landowners, hunters, and outfitters, HB 195 was the culmination of an 18-month effort on the part the governor's Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council. "The council," says **JERRY WELLS**, "sailed into uncharted waters and developed a package that has the potential of creating a powerful program to benefit landowners, outfitters, and hunters." To find out more about HB 195 and how it might expand public hunting opportunies on private land, read "A Minor Montana Miracle" beginning on page 25. Wells, headquartered in Helena, is the administrator of FWP's Field Services Division.

Wells

MO thanks the following photographers for their contributions to this issue: **MIKE BARLOW**, Livingston; **RICK** and **NORA BOWERS**, Tucson, AZ; **MILO BURCHAM**, Missoula; **DAVE CARTY**, and **PHIL FARNES**, Bozeman; **DONALD M. JONES**, Troy; **GARY KRAMER**, Willows, CA; **NEAL** and **MARY JANE MISHLER**, and **ALAN G. NELSON**, Great Falls; **JOHN G. OBREY, JR.**, Salt Lake City, UT; **MARCO RESTANI**, Logan, UT; **RON SPOMER**, Troy, ID; and **WALT TIMMERMAN**, Helena. Thanks also to the following contributors who work for the department: **RON AASHEIM**, and **MIKE GURNETT**, Helena; **JOHN FRALEY**, Kalispell; **JIM HANSEN**, Billings; and **FRED KING**, Bozeman.